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Communism, Political Power and Personal Freedom in Marx

Beyond the Dualism of Realms

Levy del Aguila Marchena

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I write from the global South, from the historical possibilities and limitations of a scholar from a "middle-income" country like Peru. A country that in the last 30 years has been subjected to the neoliberal model of development, that before that knew the most vulgar and tyrannical forms of Maoism, a country sunk in populism of the right and the left, and that under a deeply conservative culture has made Marx, Marxism, and radical and emancipatory bets, more than a "specter," a demon, or a legion of demons. I want to believe that the time of that empty optimism with which, during these decades, capital has organized our lives on a global scale is ending; the time of this degrading form of neoliberal domination that has fallen to my generation, to the generation of intellectuals and scholars of my country, decisively affecting the wealth and horizons of our production. Perhaps the time has come to raise our banners and our emancipatory spirit again, freed from the fear of stigmatization and without shame of receiving "the branding reproach of Communism."

From the place where I write, I go back to my belongings, to my teachers, and to my friends, with whom I have thought about communism throughout my adult life. To my professors at the PUCP, especially Guillermo Rochabrún, the greatest connoisseur of Marx in my

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May 2021 Lima

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This is an investigation about communism: in particular, about Marx's communism, the scope and plausibility of his aspiration, as well as about his utopianism and the perplexities it involves. For this very reason, it is about the political dimension of social activity: that dimension where the complex societies arising in the Modern Age manage their life in common according to what concerns each of the individuals who constitute them, decisively including the social conflict that spontaneously emanates from their structuring dynamics. Our attempt is to sustain the necessity and the historical possibility of a radical emancipatory thought that positively assumes the role of political determinations for the cause of freedom. In the face of the utopian elements of the Marxian reflection on communism, emblematically expressed in the idea of a society without a State, without a public sphere, and without politics, we propose that the political dimension of praxis is inescapable for a humanly emancipated society such as the one that can be foreseen in Marx's work. It must be so inasmuch as communism would constitute a life in common emerging from capitalist society and from the ensemble of the social relations based on the individuation produced by this society. Our thesis is the following: the determination that makes politics an inescapable dimension of the communist bet lies in the progressive development of social relations and

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the relationship between the human species and Nature within the framework of the ontological finitude inherent to any technical resource that can be used to viabilize them.

Our approach assumes that Marx's thought is an emancipatory one and that the purpose of his work as a whole is but the bet for an *organized society* where persons can freely deploy their capacities and satisfy their needs. That is, to realize themselves in the richness of their activity according to the dispositions of their own personality.[1] We place Marx as a *thinker of freedom*; of a renewable freedom, to be realized through a particular articulation of human efforts that allow our species to reconcile itself as such by sublating its local narrowness.[2] The horizon at stake is the perspective of a world history and a life in common where particular subjects can find the condition of their realization, while their own individual and collective deployment is the living source of the dynamism and enrichment of the community.

The history of the reception of Marx's work in the academic field has known the most diverse vicissitudes. Transformed into the official doctrine of the regimes that resulted from the social revolutions of Leninist and Maoist orientation, as well as inspiring the progressive impulses of the West and the developmental aspirations of the so-called Third World, Marx's work knew a massive and global discredit when,

[1] We say "personality" in the anthropological-philosophical and social-historical sense used by Marx and Engels in *The German ideology*. It refers to the inner dispositions (sensuousness, will, consciousness, etc.) of the subjects, as well as to the social realizations that constitute the consummate objectivity of their praxis. Thus, this is not a psychological concept, even though it contains anthropological aspects or dimensions of our species also contemplated by psychology. In the approach of Marx and Engels, such aspects are, instead, understood from the broader perspective of a social praxis that incorporates them. A social-historical personality is not, then, only an emotional character or a psychological identity of subjects but their practical way of inscribing themselves in the world, which by the way summons such character and identity that is not only individual but also collective.

[2] In the liberal tradition, Isaiah Berlin (cf. 1999) has proposed a distinction between "positive freedom" (*freedom for/to*) and "negative freedom" (*freedom from/of*). In our approach, the positivity and negativity of freedom refer to the dialectical treatment that can be traced in the continuity that takes us from Hegel to Marx (cf. Fraser, 1997) when dealing with historical progress. We regard Marx a thinker of "freedom" rather than of "liberty" because the term "freedom" tout court is closer to this sense of "positive freedom" characteristic of Marx's emancipatory efforts. The term "liberty" has a sense related to "negative freedom" that comes from the legal ("bourgeois") sense of freedom of "not affecting the liberty of the other."

toward the end of the twentieth century, the bipolarity of the World War II Postwar collapsed and capitalism could be planted on the world scene as the "triumphant model of society." Decades earlier, the fascist alternative had succumbed to the alliance of Western democracies with the Soviet Union. Now capitalism was dispatching its temporary ally and satellites, which were finally beaten. The 1990s thus became the stage for discourses about the "end of ideologies" and, even more so, the "end of history" (cf. Fukuyama, 1992). Marx became a "dead dog" and terms like "social classes," "revolution" or "communism" became more than just bad words. They swiftly passed into academic ostracism and became part of the silence that prevailed where questions about "human emancipation," or about a justice that transcends mere formality and political correctness, had no place in the scene of nations and in the international arena.[3] It was not merely about not answering such questions, but about not even asking them in the midst of the standardizing consensus of the new variety of liberal history and culture: neoliberalism.

The silence was not definitive—never absolute—nor did it last so long. Soon the consensus around the "best way to live" and the "best way to organize the economy" had to face concerns that turned into worries between the successive financial crises of 1998 and 2008. Added to this are threats of insolvency from various States of the old "First World," including the United States of America, to confront their public debt. In the framework of a world market that is already beginning to operate as an organic and deconcentrated totality ruled by simultaneity, there are dynamics through which the weaknesses and incapacities of the so-called global capitalism become palpable "in real time" for all the members of the social and political communities that form part of the contemporary world. Of course, the scene becomes more complex if we enter

[3] For the circumstance by which right is established as *the rule of law* that viabilizes the reproduction of bourgeois society, Marx coined—early in his intellectual itinerary—the notion of "political emancipation." The historical mission of capitalism is precisely to achieve this form of emancipation that, in the current scene, portrays a rule according to a higher law reproducing the current form of production and exchange. Its counterpoint is "human emancipation." In this case, the emancipatory horizon opens up toward the possibilities of a freedom that is no longer subordinated to the bourgeois eagerness expressed in mercantile life and capitalist accumulation. Here, to a great extent, the oppressive guidelines that under "political emancipation" are presented as freedom for individuals as *citizens* without being effectively *free as persons* can be set aside here (cf. *On the Jewish Question*, in Marx, 1975c).

into the geopolitical considerations of the last lustra, such as the weakening of North American hegemony (cf. Duménil & Lévy, 2009), the fragility of the European Union (cf. Menéndez, 2013), the strengthening of emerging powers such as China or India (cf. Overholt, 2008), the evolution of wars motivated by religion or ethnicity, as well as international terrorism (cf. Moniz Bandeira, 2019), among other geopolitical phenomena that are decisive in the scene of current capitalist development. In their turn, the environmental processes related to climate change and global warming only offer greater evidence of the disposition of the capitalist economic system to deteriorate the living conditions of the human species and of its incapacity to satisfy the multiple social needs of our time that are related to the society-nature metabolism (cf. Clark & York, 2005; Davis, 2018; Storm, 2009).

The previously silenced questions now return to the core issues of our organization on a global scale. Diverse sectors of public opinion, the Academy, social movements, and even politicians take them up again to return to the critique of capitalist society. While these may not be critical perspectives with a comprehensive view, they at least address some of its dimensions and harmful repercussions on the life in common. Thus, we rediscover the irrationality of our form of social organization and the way we distribute the resources destined for production and consumption. In this way, we are also allowed to gauge our real capacity to make decisions as members of the much talked about "global community" we belong to.

Well, Karl Marx's work constitutes a vast and fertile place from where we can take up again the questions defining our current situation of crisis. In our view, the logic of capital—this peculiar form of organization that is at the base of our contemporary crises—has not known in the history of ideas a theoretical work of greater discursive and practical interpellation than Marx's. And this is not only because of its *criticism of political economy*, but also because of the *horizon of humanity* that this work carries with it, where the notion of *praxis* has a central place. Praxis in Marx is anchored in the social needs that give it meaning and the social capacities from which to satisfy them. It is a notion disposed toward the freedom that human individuals capable of transcending the *misery of having* (cf. *Paris Manuscripts*, especially § 1, in Marx, 1975b) and the *universal egoism* (cf. *On the Jewish Question*) that govern the culture of capital would aspire to. But Marx's work is also topical by its claim to confront the existence of the modern State and the liberal parameters under which citizenship has been conceived, as well as the ideological discourses from

which its legitimacy is associated with the prospects of the accumulation of capital. Of course, several other aspects of Marx's work can be useful to situate us in the contemporary world and its crises, including the society-nature relation, the anthropological-philosophical dimension, the question of progress, technology, among many others.

We are interested in investigating the Marxian peculiar conception of political power; in particular, for the case of a hypothetical communist society. We will present the radicality by which Marx, from certain frameworks of reflection of modern philosophy, offers a *radical commitment to individual freedom* that leads him to go beyond the *liberal horizon* and its understanding of political power. At the same time, some of his fundamental theoretical presumptions—not always evident or explicit—do not let him go beyond such a horizon when it comes to thinking an emancipated society that transcends the framework of negative freedom under which liberalism is sustained. Marx proposes that this social formation, communism, could dispense with political life, outlining a social life that would be *free of* or emancipated from this dimension of praxis.

In general terms, we can state our philosophical-political problem within the framework of the relation between personal freedom and political power in Marx's work: Does personal freedom find better conditions for its realization as individuals become independent from political power and this power is strictly restricted and delimited, or, on the contrary, is the positive reinforcement of the political dimension of praxis an unavoidable mediation for the interests of freedom? Better still, in face of the ultimate interest of the work that summons us, communism, and its formulation in historical terms: What efficiency or role should be assigned to the political dimension of human activity in the cultivation of the personal self-realization of individuals voluntarily associated in a community that had sublated the capitalist private property of the means of production and its (also private) management?

We propose an interpretation of Marx's communism as the bet for a society of *free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals*, whose personal self-realization can only be given from their full co-belonging with the common. For this reason, we understand a non-substantive community where the interest of particular subject and the satisfaction of the universal needs of our species—whose activity is globalized in the contemporary world—responds to a modern and progressive view of history. We maintain that this communist bet suffers in Marx from a fundamental

deficiency that condemns it to utopianism and that consists of a classic liberal feature: the *rejection of political power*.

It could be considered that the time to raise these types of questions and investigations has passed, that these would be more appropriate to revolutionary situations associated with moments in which the logic of capital, its juridical-political institutionalism, as well as its ideological supports, would know a positive alternative that could confront them. In effect, such an alternative simply does not exist in the global scene of our time. Forms of resistance of an anti-capitalist nature or demands for an alternative management of the life in common can be traced, but normally they do not transcend the local sphere, lacking greater international or global integration. Above all, they usually do not focus, in the critical and propositional, against the structural keys of our mode of production. Despite this, it is also true that the recent crises of low and medium intensity of the now global cycles of reproduction of capital are beginning to break the monolithic ideological trust—whether political, academic or of common sense—about the guidelines that *should* define our social organization; moreover, under a growing sense of belonging to a single humanity and a common destiny. This intuition of the universal character of the struggle against the logic of capital is pivotal. Beyond his lively enthusiasm about the chances of success of the various revolutionary events of his time, for Marx it was always a decisive conviction that the revolution against capital must be worldwide in order to be properly such, and not a perverse turn of the screw where "all the old filthy business would necessarily be restored" (*The German Ideology*, p. 49, in Marx & Engels, 1976). If, in the course of the time that separates us from his life and work, we can agree that capitalism has but expanded its world-historical development, then our time is even better than that known to our author for participating of this conviction.

Although it is manifest that the triumphant capitalism that prevailed after the end of Cold War and the massive ideological discredit of Marx's work—at least since the 1980s—meant a marked decline in its academic treatment, production around it has not ceased in recent decades. In most cases, the purpose of revisiting it was to declare it liquidated, often by simplifying and vulgarizing his ideas. Nevertheless, during that same period, Marx's criticism of capitalism maintained its validity. Among the many paths to be referred to, we find the developments that took place in the North American academy around political economy (cf. Harvey, 2010, 2017), in the English academy apropos of ideological criticism

(cf. Eagleton, 1991, 2011a, 2011b), or by certain sectors of continental European academia, where peculiar new combinations of Marx's dialectics and Lacanian psychoanalysis insisted on taking up the perspective of communism (cf. Stavrakakis, 2007; Žižek, 1999, 2001; Žižek et al., 2018). Likewise, from Latin America and its particular tradition of political conflict, there has been a long reflection on the irreducible antagonisms of political life and citizenship (cf. Dussel, 2004, 2008; Echeverría, 1989, 1995, 1998; Laclau, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The global scene of the Marxian reception is expanding, and knows atempts coming from Japan, such as the "transcritique," to underline Marx's emancipatory effort (cf. Karatani, 2005), while various developments from law theory posit links between the Marxian proposal and human rights (cf. Atienza, 2008).

In this regard, nothing is more encouraging than the resurgence of the MEGA^2 project: that largely improved successor of the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* initiated and developed by David Riazanov at the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow before its purge at the hands of Stalin's regime. Resumed at the beginning of this century, this new MEGA is now a collective and global academic enterprise with the collaboration of scholars from various countries. Among its 114 volumes we will find, besides the works of Marx and Engels and the successive manuscripts of *Capital*, their vast epistolary itinerary and reading notebooks (cf. Musto, 2007, 2020).

Within the framework of this progressive change of scenario, this volume of the collection *Marx, Engels, Marxisms* proposes a study of Marx's conception of political power, a discussion about his representation of communism. We start from the conviction that Marx's work transcends the frameworks of liberal citizenship and its homogenizing dispositions when thinking human freedom. From this starting point, we will propose a reading that identifies some decisive inconsistencies in relation to the Marxian representation of a communist society. These inconsistencies will be analyzed on the basis of the anthropological and historical-philosophical foundations present in Marx's work, as well as in accordance with his critique of capitalist society. In our judgment, these revolve around *a failed approach to the relation between personal freedom and political power*, from which the utopia of the Marxian representation of communism emerges.

We immediately note that it is not the utopianism that the epigones of capital tirelessly confront in relation to the failure of the socialist political regimes that emerged throughout the twentieth century under very different conditions and sources of inspiration.[4] Nor is it that of the utopianism ideologically formulated by triumphant capitalism which gloats that there is no de facto socially viable alternative to it. We refer to a less contingent utopianism that is, therefore, unavoidable for emancipatory critique. In our hypothesis, Marxian communism would be utopian due to the inconsistencies resulting from the refusal to incorporate the political dimension of praxis as an inescapable place for the management of the common in such a society. Specifically, if we stick to a mode of production that *sublates*, and not simply abolishes, the social structures from where it historically arose; that is, the structures of capitalist society.

To a great extent, Marxian communism is the representation of a life in common that envisions a horizon of freedom for individuals who would be in control of their own living conditions. Once emancipated from capitalist domination, such individuals could take care of the cultivation and promotion of their personality. The *free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals* of Marxian communism, as subjects of praxis that deploy their personality, are heirs of the culture of individuality that is already taking place under the sociality of capital. Their reciprocal interaction and the terms in which their joint reproduction is viable would meet the abyss inherent to the shape that would become dominant under the communist social formation we have in hand: the "free humanity" or "free personality" (*The Holy Family*, p. 113, in Marx & Engels, 1975) or "real freedom" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 530, in Marx, 1986). Well, when expressing the viability of this new sociality, the Marxian perspective seems to lean toward the idealization that some kind of spontaneous harmony could free individuality from the *need to* consciously and effectively *regulate* its vital exchanges, as well as its internal convergences and contradictions.

The resource that is put into play is the "abolition" (*Abschaffung*) or "dissolution" (*Auflösung*) of politics. In this way, it is assumed that such individuals can be freed from the need to politically manage the finite conditions of their individual and collective action, as an *organic totality* that concerns everyone and on which all the "associated producers" would have to make decisions (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1). The

[4] We address the vicissitudes of *real socialism* in del Aguila and Sotomayor (2019).

moment of *decision*, then, the moment at which the communist society would have to take *a* certain course of action is not attended to. This leads us to the circumstance that the community of freely associated individuals—delineated by Marx—will not be able to opt for all possible courses of action it might wish for from the deployment of the "free personality," in the way we might represent to ourselves the power of the gods. This circumstance must be assumed. Sublating the domination of capital does not turn the human condition divine or cancel out the natural and social demands of the life in common. Certainly, it can allow—we maintain with Marx—our species to take charge of itself, and that history no longer takes place behind the backs of its producers (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1), but that they voluntarily and consciously decide its future course from the determinations of their natural and social conditionality.

To do this, Marxian communism would have to address the management of the finite determinations of its own sociality, which includes the domain of decisions concerning *the common*. The radical nature of the proposed life horizon—a society emancipated with *free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals*—cannot be abandoned while we glimpse the terms of its joint realization and reproduction. Here we do not pursue any demands for detail on the how of these terms, which in the end would result in a kind of free apriorism according to some "master design," as among the old utopians. From Marx, from the philosopher of praxis and his historical conditions, but also in spite of him, we are interested in thinking the requirements for a socially emancipated humanity in what concerns one of the determinations that is inescapable and irreplaceable for it: the need for the political dimension of social activity, conceived as collective action and power over the common. The persistence of the political, when thinking the conditions of an emancipated life, would respond in our analysis to a *finitude* that would not be merely technical, but social. Moreover, it has anthropological, historical-philosophical, and even ontological roots, at least in regard to the *mode of social being* that emerges from capitalist society transformed by a communist revolution. In this new scene, we would have to encounter a praxis carrying humanly differentiated and therefore potentially antagonistic interests—even if this antagonism no longer responds to the class struggle known in the "prehistory" of mankind (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 264, in Marx, 1987).

Communist society cannot escape neither human finitude nor the social antagonisms of those who can now freely cultivate their

personality. Unless the "realm of freedom" (*Capital III*, p. 807, in Marx, 1998) that is to be consummated there actually is a "realm in no place"—at least, in no place that we can recognize under a human physiognomy. As an irreducible finitude and antagonism that would respond to the richness of human interests in a humanly emancipated history after the sublation of capitalist private property, communist sociality would require some form of political organicity[5] that would allow it to deal with such a tremendous enterprise. That is, we will argue the need for thinking a *communist politicity*, although this was originally ruled out by Marx, for whom communism was defined as a *society without a State,* without public *or political power,* or a *society that reduces the political to a merely technical matter*. Our contribution to the cause of keep on *thinking communism* confronts this Marxian thesis, but it does so on the basis of the also Marxian stamp of conceiving human action from its historical conditions of realization, under certain anthropological, historical-philosophical, and ontological foundations which we can trace in the work of this magnificent thinker.

We begin our task by directly addressing, in the second chapter, the communist horizon advanced by Marx. This would be a historical consummation resulting from the sublation of the restrictions on personal freedom coming from the capitalist mode of production; a mode of production that would have actualized the social and material openings from which those restrictions could be experienced as such. It will be thus argued that communist society comes from the entrails of capital: it is neither a retarding bet nor an external confrontation that positions itself "from outside" to absolutely deny the social forms that would have engendered it and, when the time comes, given birth to it. The consciousness of this continuity has a decisive importance for our investigation: it guides our valuation and our critique of Marx's representation of communism. Along the lines traced in our author's work, this society would make it possible to *sublate* the known experience in certain levels of social activity and existence, such as the productive forces and division of labour,

[5] The neologism "organicity" is adapted from the Spanish "organicidad," by which we refer to the condition whereby a given reality unfolds in the way living organisms do; that is, as an integrated totality of dispositions, dimensions, structures, and synergies that outline them as a complex reality. The Marxian reference for this notion of "organicity" goes back to the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, where Marx shows that production, distribution, circulation, and consumption must be understood from a perspective of *organic totality* that should be proper to the studies of political economy in a dialectical key.

or art and science. In turn, it would *abolish* other levels of such activity that would have been fundamental in the course of "natural history" but would no longer be so under communism.[6] In particular, the social classes, the ideologies associated with the reciprocal theoretical-practical positions of these classes and—where our problem lies—the political and juridical mediations from which social domination has organized and reproduced its interest.

In the third chapter, we will deal with what we have just characterized as Marx's utopianism. To this end, we will problematize the Marxian claim that a communist society could be consummated as a society where the development of the "free personality" of the associated producers would be possible without the presence of the political dimension of praxis. More than dwelling on the details of the argument behind this defenestration of the political, we want to unearth its conceptual presumptions. This will suppose, in the first place, to give an account of the Marxian conception of political power, understood as a *contingent social reality*. Its presence would have been necessary in human "prehistory," where social classes camped and established the need for forms of organization of power that were functional to their socio-economic structures of domination. According to this conception, once the last of the class-based modes of production, capitalism, collapses, so does the need for political domination that was functional to it, and the State disappears along with the torn public dimension of social life, constituted in the manner of a "heavenly sphere" (cf. *On the Jewish Question*). Thus, once situated in communism, the *artificiality of politics* would be revealed. In the face of this contingency, finally liquidated, it will be possible to know a social life provided with a new *naturality* and a new *spontaneity*, one that will not require political mediation and where the social can be resolved in purely social terms; that is, *immediate*. The support of this immediacy and of this *spontaneous harmony* will have to be the recourse to technique, or else, politics will be reduced to *administrative technique*.

[6] The Marxian dichotomy between "natural history" and "human history" opposes, within social history, on the one hand, the history of estrangement, characterized by a blind development that proceeds with its back to the will and conscience of the individuals; on the other hand, the history that sublates such a condition in communism (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1). Consistent with this dichotomy, social phenomena that lack a solution of continuity in a communist society can have a "natural" and a "human" variety. Thus, one can speak of a division of labour that proceeds in a "natural" or "human" way according to its specific place in social history.

Our next step, the nodal point of this investigation, is to outline the key dialectic that would be established in communism between the development of human capacities and needs as the relation in which the viability of the communist enterprise would be decided. This is the motive for our fourth chapter. From the specific way in which this dialectic would be delineated in a communist mode of production, we will discuss the Marxian rejection of the political dimension of praxis for a humanly emancipated society. The critical motive will be the dissociation that Marx emblematically establishes between necessity and freedom in the third book of *Capital*, a dissociation which we will call his "dualism of realms." From an alternative perspective based on a non-dualist Marxian dialectics between necessity and freedom, we will maintain that political power is an *unavoidable positive mediation for the cause of freedom*, i.e., a condition for personal self-realization, as a deployment of individual and collective particularities that develop in dialectical interlocking with the common. From our own Marxian reading, we will place ourselves at the antipodes of liberalism and its conviction that "power is a necessary *evil*" to think of it rather as a positive determination for individual, collective and communal freedom. Our argument will lead us to a different register from that of Marx. Nevertheless, it will rest on elements that come from his own work, that is, from the historical (social, economic, political, technical) and anthropological-philosophical determinations that can be identified when estrangement in classist societies is there criticized. Thus, we will focus on the dialectics between human capacities and needs in the opening of "human history." We will maintain that it would require a management politically disposed in accordance with the diversity of interests and the anthropological finitude that would characterize communism as a *result* of the activity of human beings whose historical shaping comes from capitalism.

Toward an ending that identifies the *critical tasks of the present* for thinking communism, in the fifth chapter we will pose the question of what would be a *communist politicity*, functioning as a necessary *medium* for the *sustainable deployment* of a humanly emancipated praxis. That is, a praxis *free of* social domination expressed in the private property of the means of production, while at the same time *free for* the self-realization of the personalities of the associated producers. The crises and contradictions of capital return again and again to the question of communism. We will propose that, if it is to be approached radically, the corresponding exploration will have to be situated from Marx and beyond Marx. To this

end, we will review the places in Marxian works where we can find the closest thing to *outlines* of what would be the political management of the common in a post-capitalist society. These are scarce places. However, in our view, the Marxian work *also* contains commitments and lines of reflection that are in line with our consideration of political power as an emancipatory necessity for the life in common; not simply as a transition to human emancipation, but for communist society itself. In this case, these are places conducive to a re-reading of Marx's work. Ours not an attempt to "make Marx say what he didn't say."

The Marxian theses on political power widely participate in the tendency to make of the political a contingency that will have to be abandoned by the emancipatory historical course. Nonetheless, we find at least two levels of reflection that we will indicate as valuable sources for rethinking with Marx himself the relation between personal freedom and political power, given the ontologically rooted *totalizing sense* that encourages them. These are his philosophical anthropology and his political economy. We believe that this point of view is in itself consistent with that of the whole of Marx's work and its purpose: his justification of the historical necessity of a communist society, a necessity understood in a non-deterministic way. Finally, we will call for contemporary reflection on the place of politics as an emancipatory factor for a hypothetical communist society and we will suggest some lines of investigation that are consistent with this purpose.

If capitalism does not constitute "the end of history" and human interests are not satisfied neither under its patterns of exploitation, domination, and alienation, nor under its irrationality contradictions, and political commitments—with all their estranged firmness and coherence—then the Marxian bet for an emancipated society where *personal freedom* takes place remains completely relevant. Beyond the ways in which Marx has treated this issue, the quest for a society that sublates what capitalist society has offered to mankind is perfectly legitimate. The sources for rethinking them cannot, of course, be limited to the work of Marx or any other specific author. Nevertheless, in Marx's writings we find essential tools to continue the task of thinking an emancipated society in the face of capital, one where humanity has the best resources, including political ones, so that—as the old Marx said—it would "inscribe on its banners: From each

according to his [capacities],[7] to each according to his needs!" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87, in Marx, 1989).

* * *

Before starting, some conceptual, methodological, and expository notes regarding this work are in order. Throughout our argument, we will refer to "Marx's liberalism." Beyond the modern identity between Marx and the liberal tradition around individual freedom and progress, by "Marx's liberalism" we refer to the presence in his work of valuations and bets similar to those of liberalism in their rejection of the historical need of political power for the management of the life in common.[8] Hence, it is not about a specific interlocution apropos of this or that liberal author, although it will be made clear our reference is classical liberalism, from its iusnaturalist roots in Thomas Hobbes (1651) and John Locke (1690), to the nineteenth-century liberalism—contemporary of Marx—of John S. Mill (1859) and some of its main contemporary representatives, such as John Rawls (1971, 1993). Ours will be a reference to the liberal political conceptions that the commodity-capitalist society expresses through its political representatives, its academics and its own common sense. Of course, we cannot but take on the liabilities of all the chiaroscuro that we can establish in this regard, since ours is not a discussion of the liberal tradition considered in itself. Thus, throughout our exposition, this dialogue with liberalism will become visible, as well as our eagerness to confront this interlocutor portrayed as the spirit; a spirit that in Modern

[7] Marx uses the term "die Fähigkeiten" to refer to the ensemble of personal and social resources available to human beings to carry out the metabolism with Nature that sustains their material life and reproduces their own species. In terms of the Marxian political economy, *die Fähigkeiten* ultimately take the form of productive forces—regardless of whether or not these are under the control of the producers—as the totality of human resources at the service of the generation of wealth. The English translation in *Collected Works* uses "abilities" to translate "Fähigkeiten." This decision is disorienting because "ability" refers particularly to our qualities (not necessarily innate) *qua* entities of the individuals of our species, whether physiological or psychological, which would be independent of objective circumstances, as would be the case in technology. For its part, the term "capacity," used in English to translate "Fähigkeit," refers to a much broader totality—which is the one that interests Marx—where "abilities" are only a subjective component of the set of human forces (individual and social) given to the life of the species. For this reason, we will translate "Fähigkeit" as "capacity."

[8] For an overview of this rejection, cf. Alan Ryan (2007).

West has assumed the defense of individual freedom against any social and/or political power that could restrict its pretended and sacralized original unrestricted circumstance.[9]

Thus, resistance or open rejection of political power in the name of personal freedom and its self-realization is the key point of Marx's liberalism. We will argue that the proposal of a communist society without politics is the result of certain reductionist elements in his work. From these elements, it would be argued that, once the *basis* that produced the existence of politics in "natural history" has finally disappeared, the political dimension of social activity would be extinguished with it as its mechanically determined outcome. Politics appears as "something other" before the essential of praxis, that is, as opposed to its "material" and specifically "economic" dimension. From this conception, communism could be characterized as a form of social life *free of* the political domination that would have inevitably characterized human "prehistory" under the rule of private property of the means of production and social classes (cf. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 264). In our hypothesis, the Marxian—and, by the way, also Marxist—approach to this question would come from liberalism: in order to protect the freedom of individuals from any oppression coming from the political dimension of social life, a resistance and/or inadvertent and—at least for Marx—unwanted rejection of the common is posed, as a reality immediately identified with its political falsification in class societies. Politics would thus be synonymous with *loss* for the individual. For this reason, Marx agrees with the liberals in that politics can only be "a necessary evil," as it can be appreciated in the proposal of a dictatorship of the proletariat—considered necessary due to the remnants of the class struggle—that would lead to the self-cancellation of political power.[10]

[9] For his part, in the face of this unrestricted pretension and liberal atomism, Marx sets himself up as the *thinker of sociality*, as expressed in the sixth of his *Theses on Feuerbach* (Marx, 1976): "Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of *man*. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."

[10] The treatment of the transition to communism by means of a socialist period that finishes clearing the ground for the institution of the so-called realm of freedom will be decidedly less in this volume. In any case, it will not be a question to be dealt with in itself. Rather, we will deal with the necessity of politics in what, for Marx, would be a humanly emancipated society: communism. As far as the socialist scene is concerned, the issue has its own specificities. *Prima facie*, socialist regimes are diametrically opposed to

From this perspective, Marx would end up thinking the non-political shaping of communism in liberal terms. He abandons the possibility of thinking the positivity characteristic of the political and, with it, the role of the common in our realization as the social individuals we are. The power that the common entrails could overrun any individual resistance and would always be a threat. Hence, the political forms of the common should not endure in the long run beyond some technical system sophisticated enough to replace human beings in the complex task of deciding what is necessary for, and what is demandable of, each. That this becomes a technical-scientific decision—as it is in the administration of the private and public bureaucracies of the present—would end up being preferable to the possibility that politics maintains or, in any case, redefines its leading role. In this way, the diverse particularities would lack the possibility of participating in a space willing to generate and formulate their common bets, as well as to deal with their reciprocal differences. In our judgment, this issue would be a crucial impasse for the prospects—that is, for the reproduction and sustainability—of a communist sociality, of a sociality that would be committed precisely to the care and promotion of individual freedom and differences.

The conceptions of Marx and liberalism are the product of the civilizing orientations of modern society. They express in different ways—and from their different moments of historical emergence—what this civilization nullifies from the social orders from where it arose (its historical negations) and what it vindicates as "the proper human way of life" (its anthropological assertions). As a historical product of the same civilizing horizon, the ideas of Marx and the liberal tradition depart from the fundamental valuation of the individual, understood as a *subject*. That is, an individual capable of defining *his own* purposes for *his own* activity, capable of emancipating himself from the obstacles that, in the face of his will, constitute themselves in the manner of an *external conscious will*. In a word, it is about thinking, producing, and expanding the best possible conditions for the existence of a *free individual*. The primacy of freedom unites Marx and liberalism, but this initial anthropological consideration they share coexists with fundamental differences, for example, in

liberal governments. Let us note, at least, that there is a profound modern convergence between the two from which the reduction of politics to administrative technique operates once it has been desubstantialized and its appreciation devalued as a merely instrumental source of organization for the life in common.

the consideration of the historical determinations of individuality or the question of universal equality, issues that we will attend to later.

Regarding the liberal perspectives present in Marx's political thought, we are interested in determining to what extent the Marxian conception of the political represents a radical rupture with the political philosophy of liberalism. We maintain that Marx takes a "step forward" from liberalism through his conception of freedom from and for concrete individuals, and not conceived as equal in the abstraction of modern right and citizenship.[11] This is what communist coexistence would be about: the self-realization of the personality of particular subjects. The purpose from now on will be to establish whether Marx's conception of the political dimension of social activity assumes, unlike liberalism, that being free does not mean to be so exclusively in negative terms, i.e., *being free of* class domination, from ideologies and from the State. The communist horizon demands a positive sense of human freedom; that is, to address the question of *what one should be free for* in a communist society of free and (mutually) different individuals. To take on this positivity of human freedom means to face up to the fact that the will of individuals seeks to do *for itself*—to say it with Hegel—the social and natural resources of the world, so that the world *really*—what here can only mean *voluntarily and consciously*—becomes *its* world. According to our proposal, such an aspiration should end up articulating the will to take care of and to rule over the political level of praxis dealing with the management of the common; a level which, in the Marxian proposal, would have to disappear along with class domination in the communist society. Liberalism can only think freedom as negativity. We wonder how decisively the Marxian approach takes charge of freedom in positive terms. That is, how radically different Marx and the liberals are on this point and what this supposes in terms of their ethical and political horizons for the realization of freedom in a humanly emancipated society.

In the process of this interpellation, we have found it useful to distinguish between politics and its institutional forms. As opposed to the mere *technical means* of socio-economic domination derived from the class structure of society, politics can be thought of as a *medium*, that is, as

[11] Recently, Axel Honneth (cf. 2014, pp. 50–62) has also drawn attention to this point.

a dimension (from) where the life in common is determined as such, as something more than the immediate aggregation of particular subjects or the external relation between them in its various bureaucratic and institutional forms. It is an articulating dimension that constitutes the practical condition of possibility for particular subjects, while resting on their interests, concrete interests from which their own sense of community originates. The conception of politics as a technical means defines not only liberalism, but also—we maintain—the mechanical formulations of Marx and Marxism. In our judgment, the alternative conception is also present in Marx's work, including, for instance, his political economy. Here, we appreciate a dialectical perspective of social totality from which the levels of production, circulation, distribution, and consumption are articulated for understanding the structure of the capitalist mode of production. In this perspective, no essentialist commitment to any damned or sanctified social form of human activity appears. From this approach, politics can be perfectly situated in its historical necessity under the communist horizon. However, in his representation of communism, Marx does not persist in this view, just as most of the Marxist tradition has been oblivious to or turned its back on this theoretical possibility.

From the perspective of politics as a *medium* for the management of the life in common, all members of a society are inevitably called upon, as subjects of its purposes and producers of its structures, while requiring of the common, of political life, to viabilize the interest of their particularity. Hence, there is no room for indifference or evasion in the face of this dimension of human activity that is politics, since everything that participates in the common eventually reaches particular subjects. In this way, we do not express any nostalgia for the classical substantivity of the Greeks or for some other pre-modern cultural matrix that still cannot recognize the full presence of individuality. This cannot be the case at least from the interest that guides our investigation: communism is that modern community whose purpose is the personal realization of its *members* characterized as *concrete individuals*, i.e., differentiated. At the same time, neither can it be a discreetly instrumental space as it is in liberal modernity, where selfish appetite prevails, and individual interest takes the form of detached particularity and the consequent formality of justice. It will be, then, a dimension of human activity where the bets and decisions are defined that concern the satisfaction of the particular needs, of individuals and collectives, as well as their dialectical articulation with the development of their capacities; to a great extent, the dimension from where the

management of the conditions of existence of freely associated producers is decided.

Of course, the very notions of "the political," "the public," and "the state" in Marx's work can carry a certain indetermination and even an ambiguity of manifestly different meanings. We assume the hermeneutic option of distinguishing between the literality of isolated writings and what Ágnes Heller calls "the main tendency" of Marx's thought, taking into account the work he produced from an integral reading of it (1976, p. 22). For the rest, this is not an analysis with philological pretensions but a thematic one, which relates to the whole of Marx's work according to the perspective of an author who is aware of the routes of deepening that remain to be traveled from more detailed monographic and textual works. In this line, regarding Marxian sources, we have not followed a linear chronological exposition fitting the sequence in which Marx wrote his works. Rather, we have resorted to these sources in accordance with the argumentative needs of our approach. The disadvantage of this exhibition strategy is that it commits us to dealing, in the same section or paragraph, with textual sources belonging to different moments of the work we are studying. Our justification lies in the community of theoretical and practical dispositions that delineate, in Marx's work, a continuum of purposes and interests that is sustained through the various moments of his intellectual biography.

Thus, within the framework of Marxist historiography, we are diametrically opposed to Althusser's claim about the *coupure épistémologique* that would have taken place in the development of Marx's works (cf. Althusser, 1970, 1971; Althusser & Balibar, 1971); specifically, the passage from a humanist period to a "properly Marxist" one in our author.[12] The period of this rupture would have been between the writing of *The Paris Manuscripts*, in 1844, and the making of *The German Ideology*, in 1845. In any case, the most important factor in determining the rupture is the replacement of old concepts based on philosophy of history by new ones coming from political economy, such as "relations of production," "productive forces," "mode of production," among others.

For our part, the recognition of the evolution of the investigations and conceptual resources that Marx gestated during his years of intellectual activity should not lead to the hermeneutic route that suggests the

[12] For the analysis of the Althusserian proposal, cf. Coombs (2015, Chapter 5), Johnston (2017), and Sotomayor (2018, Chapter 1).

existence of two or more Marxes depending on the different moments of this production—moments which no doubt meant a progressive evolution and enrichment of this production, with which a conceptual apparatus and a vocabulary was developed with appreciable changes and nuances. From our perspective, rather, the double theoretical-practical horizon of the Marxian work remains intact throughout its integrity, at least from his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Rigth* (Marx, 1975a) of 1843 onwards. Because of this double horizon, we have in mind: (a) the criticism of the bourgeois-capitalist society, and (b) the bet for a radical emancipatory horizon, that is, the Marxian bet for communism.[13] Around both dispositions, the contribution to the human species and the singular value of the work of Karl Marx is at stake. From this assumption, the following exposition proposes a comprehensive reading of his writings openly committed to their profound continuity. On each occasion, the conceptual articulations that we will propose between different moments of Marx's work will have to be asserted and their plausibility can be judged by the reader.[14] In particular, with respect to the field of our investigation: the Marxian conception of political power.

Our *own reading* of Marx's classic writings is carried out from our educational background in the Peruvian and Ibero-American academy, and in dialogue with the global production about Marx to which we have accessed during the course of this investigation. Our literary debts are multiple. They include the early heterodoxies of Karl Korsch (2016) and Karel Kosík (1976), and range from English Marxist historiography and the work of Eric Hobsbawm (1962, 1975, 1984, 1987, 1994, 2011, Chapter 7) to the Budapest School and the heirs of György Lukács (1971, 1978), from where we highlight Ágnes Heller (1976, 1984), István Mészáros (1970) and György Márkus (2014) with their reflections on alienation and communist emancipation. Among them, we find the Anglo-Saxon tradition of analytical Marxism and their brainy studies on topics such as history, politics, justice, and ethics in Marx's work

[13] About the continuity of Marxian work regarding a decisive concept such as alienation, cf. LeoGrande (1977); regarding the continuous evolution of the dialectical method in Marx from its relation with Hegel, cf. MacGregor (2014, especially Chapters 1 to 3).

[14] For the reader interested in the contrast between Karl Marx's life circumstances and the development of his work, cf. McLellan (1973), Attali (2007), Leopold (2007), Jones (2016) and Musto (2018).

(Cohen, 1978, 1981, 1988; Elster, 1985, 2003; Wright, 1994, 1995, 2015; also cf. Veneziani, 2010), as well as various receptions from Continental Europe (Rubel, 1970, 2003) and Ibero-America (Bermudo, 1975, 2006; Prior, 2004) on topics such as the integrity of Marx's work, the materialist dialectics and the problem of freedom in our author. Special mention should be made of the study of Marx's ethnological notes by John Maguire, his review of Marx's political theory, and especially his proposal to distinguish "politics" and "government" as a key to reading the emergence of the political in the history of the division of labour (1978). All these debts can be appreciated throughout our exposition.

Finally, we have taken a categorical distance from the vast course of the political history of Marxism, taking charge of Marx's work, but not of the different variants, orthodox or heterodox, that later claimed themselves as heirs. In this decision, we include, with few exceptions, the works of Engels that have not been co-authored with Marx. We are aware that the latter is a difficult hermeneutic decision that opens the way to a line of criticism to our work that we can only assume. The purpose is to satisfy the need to distinguish between "the Marxist" and "the Marxian" (cf. Thomas, 1991). Let us be sure that we are not encouraged by any variety of the classical *gigantomachia peri tēs ousias* ("a battle of giants concerning Being," cf. Heidegger, 1996, § 1), but by the recognition that too much has been asserted and postulated in the name of Marx, and often without much relation to the ideas that we can legitimately discern in his work. Thus, to cite examples that are crucial to us, we will have the opportunity to argue from Marx against various Marxist egalitarianisms that claim to be his heirs without being so in our judgment, while other theses such as that of the contingency of the political for a humanly emancipated life are both Marxist and perfectly assertible from Marx's work. There are, then, between the one and the other, between "the Marxist" and "the Marxian," points of rupture and continuity that it is necessary to identify in favor of the conceptual precision of the argumentation that now follows.

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CHAPTER 2

Reconciling Praxis with Itself

Let us directly address the question before us: What is communism for Marx? To answer this capital question from Marx's available writings means to address the structural determinations from which capitalism sets limits on itself and engenders its own crises of reproduction. From such crises, the producers of social wealth (the proletariat) would be in a position to deploy a revolutionary activity against the logic of capital (i.e., Money-Comodity-Money' or M-C-M'), which supposes certain forms of revolutionary consciousness (cf. Lukács, 1971, pp. 83, 107; Wolpe, 1970). Now, according to Marx, capitalism not only produces the dynamism of its own dissolution, but, as part of the same historical movement, it establishes the initial conditions for the reproduction of the society that is to succeed it.

Until the point of emancipatory rupture against the order of capitalist social domination, Marx offers the vast deployment of social, economic, and political necessity from which to affirm its inevitability. Thus, we have: (a) a philosophy of history—with its respective anthropological basis—containing a theory of the progress of the successive modes of production throughout social history; (b) a political economy that accounts for the social structures of capitalist reproduction up to the culminating moment of the crises; (c) a conception about the structuring of political power, which results from the class shaping of society, and the margin of action

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of the revolutionary alternatives. These issues, considered in themselves, will not be dealt with here. In line with Marx, neither are we going to deal with a normative critical approach for thinking of societal alternatives to capitalism. This is the case of contemporary authors such as Erik Olin Wright, who has proposed a normative basis for criticizing the capitalist mode of production and from there proposing its transformation on the basis of the pairs: equality/justice, democracy/freedom, and community/solidarity (cf. Wright, 2019).

Instead, this philosophical investigation deals with communism as the culmination of a particular historical process. In relation to communism—as thought out from Marx—it is no longer just a matter of dealing with the historical conditionality that anticipates the radical change of the way the human species has been organizing its social reproduction, especially with regard to the production of wealth and the disposition of social surpluses. Even less is it merely a matter of discerning normative guidelines for the life in common. It is a matter, decisively, of understanding the new conditionality produced in that so-called realm of freedom (*Capital III*, p. 807, in Marx, 1998) where human beings would come to be in control of their products and would have abandoned the alienating terms of their previous reproduction. From the most recent versions of his theory of recognition, Axel Honneth has been emphasizing this kind of Marxian "social freedom" from its Hegelian roots (2014, pp. 50–52). However, what would be the *conditions of reproduction* of a communist society according to the "natural history" from where it would emerge and that would be sublated in "human history"? What do Marx's philosophy of history and its anthropological basis, his political economy and his political conceptions provide us in this respect?

The issue could be swiftly dismissed, noting that Marx neither formulated a *theory of communism* nor seemed interested in doing so. Marx's works constantly encourage the bet for a communist society, human emancipation, and the sublation of the capitalist mode of production. His treatment of communism, though, is mostly presented in contraposition to other societal modes, like in: "In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past" (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 499); that is, in the form of a *via negativa* (cf. Booth, 1989). It could be argued that there is no other way: as an object of study, the inquiry of what a communist society would look like society refers to a *utopic* reality, without a place or effective temporality. Therefore, its treatment per se would be nothing but

a motive to awake consciences and to embellish—without further determination—the horizon of emancipatory struggles. If Marx's philosophy is a philosophy of praxis about what is being or has been deployed, his works will have little interest in a priori outlining the forms of communist society. Rather, any general statements that might be made in this regard would lack any meaningful or relevant content. Faced with the possibility of a Nietzschean "philosophy of dawn" (cf. Nietzsche, 2006), for example, Marx's scarce expressions of communism place him in the line of a Hegelian "philosophy of dusk" (cf. Hegel, 2008, p. 16).

Nevertheless, it is our conviction that the confrontation of the social organization of capital and its culture—in short, of its horizon of civilization—can hardly avoid the need to positively formulate the benefit of its sublation for the whole of the human species; that is, the need to determine what a communist society would consist of. According to Marx, capital has provided humanity with the greatest wealth ever known; it has established the individual freedom—though in alienated varieties—never knew by the preceding social formations, it has raised the horizon of science and the possibility of a unitary sense as a species integrated into the world market, against which nothing in known history can compete. In the face of this, we may naively ask: Why then should we proceed to the revolution of the capitalist relations of production? Why not rather wait for capitalism to develop some way of mitigating its crises and viabilizing itself, and also viabilizing in this process the "living wage," "decent labour" and the "quality of life" of that vast and diversified contemporary proletariat from which it obtains its vital input? A little more than 150 years after the first edition of *Capital,* we have seen capitalism come out, time and again, from such situations of self-inviabilization. So, if the bet for communism has to be more than the rejection of a particular social order, what social forms and structures of reproduction does Marx refer to when he outlines his representation of communism?

For Marx, the logic of capital necessarily engenders crises of reproduction. However, from our non-deterministic reading, such crises do not inevitably engender a revolutionary subject willing to redefine the basic social structures of the capitalist mode of production. Such a subject is rather a practical condition for the revolutionary transformation of society. Therefore, for the viability of the communist cause, the "subjective moment" of the revolution would have to assume a radical emancipatory interest, given that the "blind forces" of "natural history" cannot consummate its institution *by themselves.* In this framework, it is

worth asking: *Why the dispossessed from capital should become revolutionaries?* Why should their will be committed to the gestation of a horizon alternative to the capitalism we know and that is still in progress? It is, then, a *theoretical-practical matter*: it is not only a *matter* of identifying the unsatisfied human needs under a given social organization—i.e., capitalist society—but of arguing the plausibility that its long-awaited sublation will effectively produce the desired satisfaction.

Why did the proletariat—we insist—have to commit itself to the communist revolution? In the context of the growing pauperization observed by Marx, it was reasonable to argue that "proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains" (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 519, in Marx & Engels, 1976a). We, on the other hand, have to address this question from the complex web of contemporary capitalism and its management of the crises, with misery and welfare quotas distributed among the various social subjects whose interests are contraposed to—or at least in tension with—those of capital. Of course, this scenario is different from the one witnessed by Marx during the Second Industrial Revolution and requires a correspondingly different treatment. Nevertheless, we believe that his works remain the fundamental place from where to approach this question. Marx's bet for communism is a bet against hunger and pauperization at the hands of the capitalism of his time, but it is also, at the same time, and more broadly, a bet against social domination and against the experience of a human praxis integrally alienated under the logic of capital. Thus, we stumble upon a conception that not only sets itself up against modern forms of material misery but is presented as a radical bet for *freedom* (cf. Prior, 2004, pp. 159–161, 169–170; Screpanti, 2004). In our view, this is a factor of its current validity in the contemporary scene of a capitalism that presents itself as the only condition for social progress and material well-being. This bet for freedom is expressed in the classic quote from the *Communist Manifesto*:

> In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 506)

Of course, this bet for freedom is a very problematic issue. Moreover, it contains different dimensions that cannot simply be left aside if we are not only interested in the critique of capital, but also in positively thinking the horizon of "human emancipation."

Now, to put the issue in its proper place, we must not overlook the iron anti-utopianism declared by Marx, and which has been widely insisted upon (cf. Fischbach, 2016; Musto, 2020, pp. 24–30; Schmidt, 1971, Chapter 4). Let us see the case of the aspirations that the proletarian revolution would satisfy in the Paris Commune. Such aspirations are not to be understood as the effort to see idealized models of life in common realized with their "receipts for the cook-shops" of the revolution (*Capital I*, p. 17, in Marx, 1996), or of implanting utopias "*par décret du peuple*" (*The Civil War in France*, p. 335, in Marx, 1986b), but of traveling through historical struggles and paths that would transform circumstances, as well as human beings themselves. The issue has been treated in terms of a "rational utopia" (cf. Heller, 1984, Chapter 5), or of a tension from where emerges the facet of "tragic thinker" that would characterize Marx in this respect (Eagleton, 2011a, p. 77). In any case, if producers are meant to take charge of the conditions of their own activity in a society emancipated from private property of the means of production, this could hardly occur without considering the conditions under which such an activity could be freely deployed. In this respect, Marx's works are far from completely silent (cf. Musto, 2020, pp. 30–33). Nevertheless, it is clear that the "realm of freedom" is addressed by our philosopher from a decidedly more indeterminate perspective than that which we can find when those same works are situated in the field of critique—and this for each of the domains mentioned above, be it the philosophy of history, and its underlying anthropology, political economy or political analysis.

The passage from "natural history" to "human history" thus summons a duality within the Marxian intellection itself. It is about the continuity between the preceding historical *necessity* and the personal *freedom* that comes without radically exploring its conditions of realization and reproduction, thus relegating the problem to a *matter of the future* (cf. Eagleton, 2011a, pp. 73–79). For our part, we want to discuss this perspective. In our view, to formulate the positive determinations of a communist society would be a task—if not *the* task—of that contemporary critical thought not willing to make capitalist society the naturalized *final form* of human coexistence. In one of the most resounding collective efforts committed to thinking communism in recent years, the Congress *On the Idea of Communism* (Birkbeck University of London, March 2009) was based on the thesis that "from Plato onwards, Communism

is the only political Idea worthy of a philosopher" (Žižek & Douzinas, 2010, p. ix).

This intended worthiness demands, in our opinion, a challenge and a performance that, if fully assumed, will have to deal with enormous difficulties in the contemporary scene. Just to mention one of them, we want to emphasize the need for *prospective understanding* in the global scene of capitalism, to account for its incontinence when confronted with the demands of environmental, economic, and social sustainability, for example, under the consideration of the Earth as a "bio-anthropo-sphere" from the paradigm of complexity (Morin, 1994, 1995, 2000). This means, to a great extent, to reformulate the society-nature metabolism, abandoning its subjection to capitalist accumulation. The expert systems of capitalism and contemporary political forms are already committed to the prospective management of social resources, but always from the limits associated with their interests of domination. Therefore, they are unconscious systems with regard to their permanent generation of barriers for their own reproduction. We are not dealing here with a merely epistemological question in traditional terms, but with the need to outline, from the historically inherited conditionality, the course of what is feasible according to a radically emancipatory perspective; that is, committed to the *management of the common*.

For now, we will present some central elements of Marx's vision of communism. As we have pointed out, his treatment is far from disputing the leading role of the critique of capitalist society in the works we are studying. It has been pointed out on many occasions—and from different approaches and perspectives—that the content of phenomena such as the abolition of private property, the disappearance of class divisions, the control of the means of production by the associated producers or individual freedom in the face of the division of labour is not further developed by Marx (cf. Webb, 2000, Chapter 3). Now, in our judgment, precisely his critique of capitalism allows us to identify proposals that define not only the negations of departure, but also the positive conditions that characterize the communist society that would emerge from the civilization of capital.

2.1 The Historical Conditions of Departure

According to Marx, the maintenance of the social forms of capitalism supposes the foreignness and the domination of accumulated dead labour

over the living labour constantly given by proletarians to the accumulation of capital. The capitalist is the dominant personification of this circumstance according to which the producers misplace their product under a legality and a structure that results in their self-negation. Therefore, for a communist society, the negative requirement of departure is the sublation of the social relations of capitalist production; that is, of capital insofar as it is a material power estranged from its producers. This material power has been reduced to a *mere thing* in which its social character and the particular interest that produced it is lost; that is, a naturalized social phenomenon and contraposed to the conscious will of the producers. Wage labour is also sentenced in this way, since, in the same way that *capital* and *capitalists* are inseparable, so are *wage labour* and *capital* (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 234 ff., in Marx, 1986a).

From a perspective of *emancipatory rupture* in line with Marx's works, a communist organization of production and social life would suppose the negation of capital as the dominant social form in the structuring of relations between producers. Likewise, since capitalism produces and contains the personification acted on in the individual capitalist (cf. Rochabrún, 1993, pp. 62–72), the inseparability of both negations is manifest: that of the dominant social form and that of its personifications. It is not possible, then, for a capital to deploy its dynamism outside its subjective appearance as a capitalist, while showing in this way that social domination is not subject to the contingency of the person of the capitalist (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 229–230). A similar personification occurs with respect to the worker:

> In the same way the individual worker can cease to be the being-for-itself of labour; he can inherit money, steal, etc. But then he ceases to be a worker. As worker he is only labour existing for itself. (*Grundrisse I*, pp. 229–230)

Now, the sublation of the social forms of capital would suppose a different pattern for harvesting wealth, in terms of both the generation of use values and the development of productive forces. Wealth would cease to be that accumulation of commodities asserted over the interests of the producers by virtue of some rationality that is foreign to them, as is the case under the logic of capital. Under the *communist horizon*, instead, *wealth* would have to be identified with *human satisfaction*, with an always growing satisfaction associated with the totality of the development of the capacities that are "in the absolute movement of becoming"

(*Grundrisse I*, p. 412). The world interdependence generated by capitalism, where the vast diversity of human efforts is integrated according to the demands of private accumulation and the mediations of the domain of the circulation of commodities, is thus revealed in its contingency. In a communist society, we would have a different world interdependence: the human potentials already freed from this limited pattern of appropriation and commodity circulation will be able, based on the preceding historical experience, to develop the totality of their forces.[1]

This sense of totality is not an abstract category. It is based on the practical interweaving instituted by world history with the emergence of large-scale industry.[2] Such a history would now know the opportunity for a deployment not limited by the thirst for surplus value but decided according to the mutable dispositions of human beings. The presumption of an individual disposed toward the incessant renewal of himself is a condition resulting from social life under capitalism and a presupposition of Marx's emancipatory view; a vision where communism would consummate what capital cannot because of its immanent contradictions. Capitalist society makes possible the production of wealth that, ultimately, will not be able to provide for its producers. The negation that results for the producers results in the termination and culmination of a preceding development: "Just as the system of bourgeois economy unfolds to us only gradually, so also does its negation of itself, which is its ultimate result" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 98, in Marx, 1987).

Accordingly, the process referred to by Marx is part of a dynamism of *progress* where certain social presuppositions make communism possible; in particular: (a) the cultivation of a man rich in always renewable needs and now freed from social domination, and (b) the deployment of a productive force that can attend to his constantly renewed demands (cf. Screpanti, 2007, pp. 47 ff.). Both conditions refer to the progressive character of capital, since it is under its legality that the wealth of needs and the wealth of capacities could be developed to the point that the mediation of private property is no longer required for its free development. These are conditions that are jointly reproduced and that would come to know a different way of reciprocal articulation and requirement.

[1] On the aspects that would be part of this total development, cf. Ollman (1977).

[2] To address the sources of Marx's cosmopolitanism, cf. Courtemanche (2012).

As the treatment of the limits of capitalism advances in counterpoint with what would be a communist sociality, the Marxian focus is directed toward individuality. In the end, such individuality is the source of the needs and capacities that would set in motion the new social organization; in particular, on the extent of its cultivation throughout previous history. In the *Grundrisse*—and much in accordance with the philosophy of history of *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1976b)—Marx underlines both the immaturity of the individuality that flourishes in the midst of the alienation of the commodity-capitalist relations, and the gain in universality already present there. Moreover, a universality where the alienation that naturalizes the spontaneity of the sacralized mercantile life, as a condition of all individuality, is generalized (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 98–99).

The inversion—that takes place in capitalism—by which labour appears subject to its own product, i.e., capital, establishes the necessity to dissolve all the *unconditional presuppositions for production*. At the same time:

> creates and produces the unconditional [presuppositions] for production, and hence all the material conditions for the total, universal development of the productive powers of the individual. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 439)

Apropos of these "unconditional presuppositions" for production, a Kantian resonance is unavoidable and not without paradox. In this respect, Karatani's "transcritical" approach proposes to think Marx's communism from the Kantian "realm of ends" and to formulate it as a categorical imperative for reconstructing a "communist metaphysics" (cf. Karatani, 2005). The reality of the *limited*, under the horizon of private capitalist property, is contraposed to the *unconditional*, under the communist horizon, the latter being outlined as full freedom *guaranteed by the path of technique* and its productive returns. We will come back to the weight of technique in Marxian communism in the next chapter.

For now, we have that the individuality to be established in a communist society cannot but be the historical result of its preceding conditions; that is, those conditions in which it arose as a product of the division of labour defined in the terms of a society of independent private producers. The Marxian expectation of such individuality is that it goes beyond the horizons of the culture of capital; thus, for example, the *misery of having* (cf. *Paris Manuscripts*, pp. 229 ff., in Marx, 1975b). From this perspective of progress, the revolution against capital does not have the sense of

a return to any substantive community. On the contrary, it would be a reshaping of the relationship between the individual and society, where the realization of the former appears as the *effective meaning* of the life in common. To achieve this, it is necessary, above all, to sublate the limits of the capitalist organization of production; of that network of contradictions sublated and re-established by the logic of capital. Marx's assertion is that, at a certain point, capital reveals itself as a *self-imposed barrier* that must be sublated:

> Moreover, the universality for which capital ceaselessly strives, comes up against barriers in capital's own nature, barriers which at a certain stage of its development will allow it to be recognised as being itself the greatest barrier in the way of this tendency, and will therefore drive towards its transcendence through itself. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 337)

The point at which this need for self-improvement becomes exoteric or is universally manifested would be given by the "*highest degree of the development of the productive forces*" (*Grundrisse I*, pp. 464–465), where such *highest degree* is always relative and limited to the relations of production in which such a development can take place. Likewise, this *highest degree* coincides with "the richest development of the individuals" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 465) as far as it is possible for them from a certain base of social relations of production: "As soon as this point has been reached, further development appears as a decline, and the new development begins from a new basis" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 465). The culmination of the capitalist mode of production refers to the dynamics of immanent contradiction expressed in its crises of reproduction (cf. Clarke, 1994; Laibman, 1983). The need to sublate these impasses to the deployment of freedom is a historical necessity—not an absolute one—as it was the very establishment of labour-capital inversion (appropriation of the alien labour without equivalent by means of the form of change) that has distinguished modern societies (cf. *Grundrisse II*, pp. 209–210). This historicity, by the way, is foreign to the understanding of the "bourgeois economist" (cf. *Grundrisse II*, p. 210). He does not recognize this *contingency in necessity* as a *non-absolute necessity* of the historical becoming and, hence, proceeds—as in right-wing Hegelianism—by establishing an identity between objectivation and estrangement.

Despite this labour-capital inversion, the dominance of capital has made possible the unprecedented cultivation of individual wealth through

the *general interdependence* of social relations that have been possible and necessary given the "the universality of intercourse" and of "the world market" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 465). From this basis, any limit has been confronted, which may henceforth be presented as an obstacle—but not as a "*sacred limit*"—to the development of individuality (*Grundrisse I*, p. 466). A certain *radically human immanence* is thus established. The transformative dispositions of human beings, objectified throughout social history as their own material powers or productive forces, become the mediation of themselves. Through this negative recursion, such mediations are reinvented, freeing themselves from the obstacles they established in their previous praxis. A dialectic between materiality and freedom is thus established (cf. Eagleton, 2011a, pp. 96–97). Communism would be that society that can deal with the material determinations of productive necessity, turning them into a condition of self-development, that is, a condition that emancipates individuals from the same material subjections as *immediate ones*. This is what Marx properly conceives as a *process*:

> Hence also the comprehension of his own history as a *process* … The process of development itself posited and known as the presupposition of the same. For this, however, necessary above all that the full development of the productive forces has become the *condition of production*; and not that particular *conditions of production* are posited as the limit to the development of the productive forces. (*Grundrisse I*, pp. 466)

That is, communism is the moment in which the process of social history has the self-regulatory purpose of allowing the productive forces to fully develop. Of course, this fullness should, in turn, be inscribed in a particular historical record, since this proposal has no claim of absoluteness. Thus, the known social formations would have disposed of a potential "full development" of their productive forces: either negated by the demands of their own social dominance, or that has gone as far as these forces would allow them. Communism would achieve a "full development" free of such conditions, but here too we do not find a fixed or definitive position. This "full development" of the productive forces in communism would also be a renewable position since, precisely then, they would only be constantly reinvented, no longer hindered by the preceding modes of production. In any case, the expectation would be to deal with obstacles and limitations that can be consciously recognized. This is the Marxian expectation after inter-human relations and between human

beings and Nature have abandoned the commodity fetishism and the naturalized forms of exchange characteristic of capitalist social relations. The tendency toward infinitude in the development of productive forces expressed here should not be interpreted as the possibility of arriving at a discrete point where all human needs would be properly satiated. Such a development is, rather, the endless renewal of itself that presents itself as its own condition of non-termination in the permanent dialectic of human needs and capacities.

In this way, the *disposition of capital towards the universal* is, for Marx, perfectly established as a limited disposition, but of an effective power that is already distinctive of capitalist society in comparison with the preceding ones. According to Marx, this distinction is unfinished. This makes capital "a mere point of transition" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 464), where it is defined as an antithetical and evanescent social form that "produces the real conditions for its own transcendence" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 465). In the midst of this characterization of the finite nature of capital, we find the closest to a "formal" definition of communism in Marx's works:

> a new mode of production, in which the productive forces are not developed just to reproduce a particular situation or, at most, to extend it, but where the free, unobstructed, progressive and universal development of the productive forces is itself the presupposition of society and therefore of its own reproduction; *where the sole presupposition is the advance beyond the point of departure*. (*Grundrisse I*, pp. 463–464, my emphasis)

As a mode of production whose "*sole presupposition is the advance beyond the point of departure*," communism is presented as the incessant and unrestricted deployment of social powers. Its form is the development of the productive forces and the satisfaction of the needs they can satisfy; needs whose very mutation constitutes, in turn, the permanent spur of the constantly renewed dynamism of the former. A new sense of *production* is opening up here. It is no longer about the productive in terms of the generation of commodities for the growth of the fetishistic accumulation of exchange values and money as their general expression (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 148–149). It is rather about the extent to which the organization of the transformative activity of labour favors the development of the productive forces with a view to meeting needs. According to this perspective, there comes a point at which capital has seen its historical tasks completed:

> This is why *capital is productive*, i.e. an *essential relationship for the development of the productive forces of society*. It ceases to be such only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters a barrier in capital itself. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 251)

The historical contribution of capital to the communist interest comes from its immanent telos, i.e., the generation of surplus value.[3] This contribution ends up expressed in: (a) the surplus as a general necessity that supposes a culture of unprecedented laboriousness; (b) the exponential increase of labour productivity; and (c) the development of a "rich individuality" (*Grundrisse I*, pp. 250–251).

From these elements and deepening on the general negation of the social forms of capitalism, let us now consider more determinate negations that are part of the Marxian problematization of the capitalist crises, but now dealt with as they establish the *positive conditions* of departure for communist society. We refer, first, to the *sublation of the law of value*, inasmuch as *labour time* ceases to be the measure that rules the sense of capitalist reproduction, to move on to *free time* as a measure fixed from the promotion of the interest of personal realization. Second, we attend to the *sublation of individual labour*, as the *division of labour based on independent private producers*—key structure of the commodity-capitalist society—gives way to *social labour* as a practical and conscious integration of the associated producers. Both conditions do not suddenly *appear* as magical distinctions of communist society but *result* from the practical movement of capital; that is, they arise in the very sociality of capitalism that negates itself. These are two aspects of the same movement in which Marx identifies the limits of capitalism's capacity to reproduce itself. Thus, the historical process of capitalist accumulation establishes the foundations of the society in which those limits are to be sublated.

In accordance with the Marxian exposition about capitalist accumulation through the increase of relative surplus value, the development of machines at the service of capital opens up possibilities that—in the long run—would escape the very interest M-C-M' that has produced them and made them necessary. The appropriation of this material power by the associated producers would radically redefine their terms of existence. The consummation of such a process refers to the disappearance of the

[3] For the Hegelian root of this understanding of capitalism, cf. Rockmore (2002, pp. 193–195).

law of value as a result of the very dynamism of capital. From the use of science and technology for the development of fixed capital and the production of wealth, Marx explains it by pointing out that "the creation of real wealth becomes less dependent upon labour time and the quantity of labour employed" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 90; cf. pp. 85–86; E. M. Wood, 1984). The tendency, then, is that less and less living labour is needed for the generation of wealth. This is much more evident in the contemporary world than in Marx's time, for example, with the wealth that comes to us via the Internet (cf. Mason, 2015; Rifkin, 2014; Srnicek & Williams, 2015). It is the result of capitalist accumulation and, at the same time, an absolute limit to it because of the systemic restriction to continue incorporating more living labour for its self-increasing.

The counterpart of the sublation of the law of value is the sublation of individual labour, which also occurs as the *culmination* of the capitalist mode of production. That is, as its most complete realization which is, in itself, its self-negation and condition of departure for communist society. In effect, as part of the development of the capitalist industrial organization, the contributions of the particular workers progressively become *instances immediately constituting the* social *body of production*. The productive individuality is transmuted, along the interdependence made possible by the machines, into the form of a *social individuality* "that appears as the cornerstone of production and wealth" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 91). We are thus witnessing, through its own historical path, the negation of the original point of productive existence according to the ideology of free trade. The independent private producer, supposedly free of constraints, ended up submitted to the iron social need to organically merge as *one* with his fellow producers in order to set in motion a material power over which he has no control. This is the result of capitalist accumulation, a result that decides an unprecedented social interdependence that will be the point of departure for communist society.

The double expiration we witness advancing with the progress of capitalist industry, that of the law of value and that of individual labour, establishes that the realization of the eagerness for surplus value is sustained on obsolete premises:

> The *theft of alien labour time, which is the basis of present wealth*, appears to be a miserable foundation compared to this newly developed one, the foundation created by large-scale industry itself. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 91)

Moreover, increasingly irrational and impractical premises:

> As soon as labour in its immediate form has ceased to be the great source of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and therefore exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 91)

Large-scale industry and the constant growth of capital allow the growing production of goods and services in unprecedented magnitudes without the need for a proportional growth of human labour invested in the process. The various forms of the crises of capitalist reproduction already expressed this issue in increase of relative surplus value (cf. *Capital I*). The productivity of labour has thus deployed on an exponential scale. Moreover, as variable capital, human labour tends to diminish in relative terms in relation to the mass of constant capital set in motion; this is the direction of change in the "organic composition of capital" as the general law of capitalist accumulation progresses (cf. *Capital I*, Chapter 25). If the presence of labour is less and less in each unit of produced wealth, the same will happen with the presence of value. As the "substance of value" (*Capital I*, pp. 47–48), the relative decline of labour due to the deployment of machines undermines a system which, like the capitalist one, rests on the appropriation of unpaid labour objectified in the corporeality of commodities. There comes a point where it is possible that, at the limit, certain units of wealth are practically without labour; that is, without the substance that makes feasible the joint movement M-C-M'.

The metabolism with Nature carried out in human labour is, of course, an unavoidable anthropological condition for our species and it is precisely Marx who, throughout his works, underscores labour as our *distinction of species*. At the same time, in the Marxian expectation, the capitalist large-scale industry makes way for a shape of maximum productivity resulting in the quantitative trivialization of the presence of labour with respect to machines. We will see later that this historical result would resolve—according to Marx—the requirements of the "realm of necessity" in a communist society. For the sake of such a trivialization, the predominance of the abstract form of value (product of abstract labour) and of exchange value—which allows its measurement—over use value (product of concrete labour) would be structurally broken (cf. *Capital I*, Section I.2). The very deployment of the practical abstractions of capitalism, which in large-scale industry finds its culmination in the form of machines,

would have made this possible. To a great extent, the communist possibility of returning to the priority of wealth and the satisfaction of human needs over the accumulation of capital and the increase of money is here presented. It will not be the return to some bucolic scene of independent private producers in perfect mercantile harmony, but the affirmation of a society of associated producers whose viability rests on the high development of the productive forces. In fact, Marx's fundamental objection to Proudhon's political economy is that sublating capitalism presupposes sublating commodity forms (cf. *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in Marx, 1976). In Marx's communist approach, the sublation of capitalism supposes that use value can be detached from its commodity counterpart, exchange value, to assert itself directly as wealth resulting from the high productivity of labour available to its own producers.

Concerning the use of machines in a communist society, Marx points out in the second edition of *Capital I* that "in a communistic society there would be a very different scope for the employment of machinery than there can be in a bourgeois society" (*Capital I*, p. 396, n. 2). This is a note that appears in the long final paragraph of Sect. 2 of Chapter 15 ("Machinery and Modern Industry"), where Marx refers to diverse historical situations indicating certain adverse conditions to the introduction of machines. Such conditions would be related, essentially, to the variable alterations in the market of the labour power. What would this "very different scope" of the machinery consist of, then, in a communist context? In relation to the sublation of the law of value, the extent to which a technological change will (or will not) benefit the efficiency of production would be better determined since the price form of the proceeds of labour would be abolished. Thus, the distortions of mercantile competition—characteristic of capitalist exchange—that harm technological innovation would no longer have an effect.

In this line, it is crucial to consider the relation between the *labour process* and the *process of producing surplus value* (cf. *Capital I*, Chapter 7). If the generation of use values does not have to go through the value form, it would be possible that in the generation of wealth the qualitative is no longer lost in the quantitative (that is, in money). Thus, the measure of wealth will not be the abstractly conceived productive efficiency (always the generation of "more" value), but the concrete-particular content for the satisfaction of human needs. The immediate and homogenizing equation *more* = *better* (cf. Rist, 2008), according to which capital proceeds, is thus sublated. In such a case, this "very different

scope" (Marx says "very different," not "much greater") may indicate that production is organized not only by producing "more," but by sublating the conception of capitalist progress. A sense of progress understood quantitatively under the homogenizing abstraction of the number, one that now goes on to *assume from its root the qualitative of human needs and capacities, as well as the differences inherent to it*.

Returning to the contradictions of large-scale industry, for Marx it becomes increasingly forced and/or inadequate to maintain the order of capitalist social domination. As we have noted, it is not only about sublating the law of value that now appears as a return to the priority of use values, i.e., to the wealth which satisfies concrete human needs. It is also about sublating its counterpart: the social form of human labour under capitalism. From the perspective of the social division of labour, we are dealing with the sublation of private labour. The social character of production is, then, asserted:

> The *surplus labour of the masses* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of a few* has ceased to be the condition for the development of the general powers of the human mind. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 91)

In Marx's time, large-scale industry meant the broadest deployment of socialized labour under the logic of capital. In Marx's reading, the historical course of M-C-M' would have made it patent that the forms of private appropriation of the means of production and its products—by the social classes that dispute over the surpluses generated under capitalism—have lost their necessary character. The evolution of the organic composition of capital, as well as the progressive preponderance of constant capital, portray a scenario where the greed for surplus value is presented as *the patent nonsense* with regard to the mechanical resources already available to satisfy human needs outside the capitalist pattern. Therefore, the deployment of science and technique can now know a different horizon, one that is not based on the interests of the owners of capital, but in interests that can break their submission to the pattern of private accumulation. The "general powers of the human mind" could, consequently, be developed in terms decidedly different from those that come from the capitalist organization of labour and its dominance over scientific exploration and technological innovation.

The keys to this analysis and to these possible transformations lie in the foundations of Marxian political economy. The condition of the independent private producers raises the practical demand of viabilizing the exchange of private works and the emergence of value and exchange value for such a purpose; this, as objectified labour time that can be measured as abstract labour. The particularity of the use values only makes sense here insofar as it can solve the requirements of the general exchangeability, making such particularity be subject to exchange value. Thus, the satisfaction of human needs is subordinated to the satisfaction in money, which then becomes capital and a thirst for surplus value. This dynamism expressed in the reciprocal atomism—crystallized into law—of the independent private producers fetishizes the products of labour. It also incapacitates the ordinary conscience to recognize the social entrail and/or the reciprocal dependence of the producers put into action at the moment of the circulation of commodities.

Well then, the development of industrial production cancels out the idyllic representation of independent private producers as harmonious counterparts coexisting in the mode of egalitarian justice. Above all, it violates the very law of value and its fetishistic phenomenality. It also imposes the practical integration of these producers as part of the efforts required by capital to continue advancing in spite of itself. It establishes, consequently, the organic articulation of such efforts, not only in the mediation of exchange, but in the productive activity itself. Once these presuppositions of capitalist social structure are cancelled, the privilege of human needs and the social character of the production of wealth can be asserted for repurposing labour and redefining those responsible for its management.

The sublation of the law of value and individual labour does not mean the disappearance of the determinations of the *labour process* (object, purpose, and means of labour) from which wealth is generated (cf. *Capital I*, Chapter 7), but its *reworking according to the available time resulting from the high social productivity managed by the associated producers*. The sense of the productive process would be repurposed in favor of the greater satisfaction of needs and development of capacities. It must be stressed that—in Marx's opinion—this historical possibility points to the power of the capitalist society to create the time available in magnitudes hitherto unknown in social history:

> [Capital] is instrumental, *malgré lui*, in creating the means of social [available] time, of reducing labour time for the whole of society to a declining minimum, and of thus setting free the time of all [members of society] for their own development. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 94)

The progressive reduction of necessary labour time—due to the increase in the productivity of the employment of labour power—opens the door to available time (cf. Mandel, 1971, Chapter 7). The development of relative surplus value has therefore been the key to this process. As capitalist industry progresses, the *time of capital*—which is understood in relation to the increase of fixed capital, the greater speed of rotation, etc. (cf. *Capital I*, pts. IV–VII; *Grundrisse II*, pp. 93–94, but especially *Capital II*, Chapter II)—is more decisive than *labour time.* An essential historical condition for communism is that capitalism reaches the point where the joint movement of its productive forces converts living labour into a resource of lesser relative importance to add up at certain points of the productive process.

Of course, this behavior of capital is again antithetical and immediately negates what it makes possible. It proceeds in this way when it forces workers to uninterruptedly continue the productive process, chaining them to the necessity established by the logic of capitalist development. In effect, the law of capital is that of reducing the labour time necessary for the worker so that it contributes to the greater time:

> necessary for the capitalist. Since fixed capital is devalued as long as it is not employed in production, its growth is linked with the tendency to make [labour time] *perpetual*.(*Grundrisse II*, p. 204)

Thus, free time appears to the worker as an effective possibility that he cannot enjoy. Communism would then be characterized as the sublation of the restriction of available time in favor of the interest of capitalist accumulation, this being a particular interest whose efforts are not in accordance with the interests of the whole community (cf. Musto, 2020, pp. 41–44).

The relation that would arise in communism—on the basis of these developments of capital and the resolution of its contradictions—between the greater satisfaction of needs and the greater development of capacities would be decisively associated with the increase in *available time*. In capitalism, once his labour power is sold, the worker is subject to the

shape of "surplus labour time" which is, actually, "time necessary for the capitalist." The permanent search for surplus value establishes the disposition of the capitalist to consume the greatest possible appropriation of productive time—time of employment of the purchased labour power—independently of whether it has already produced a mass of values equivalent to its wage ("necessary labour time"). Thus, under capitalism, surplus time (time in which surplus value is generated and which is *free from* the need to pay for the reproduction of the labour power) is in conflict with the available time of the worker and for the worker. In effect, in the framework of these social relations, nothing of "the free" should be available except for the production of surplus value of capital: "But its tendency is always, on the one hand, *to create* [*available*] *time, and on the other to convert it into surplus labour*" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 94).

The generation of available time and its negation coexist, then, subject to the logic of capital. Marx highlights the progressive potential of the former: "This will be to the advantage of emancipated labour and is the condition for its emancipation" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 87). Outside the logic of private capitalist appropriation, communist society will be able to free use values (wealth) from their subjection to exchange values and thus focus on the satisfaction of human needs. In turn, such a time will be an occasion for human capacities to be cultivated far away from the narrow compulsive life imposed by the M-C-M' logic. To this will correspond the autonomous development of "the artistic, scientific, etc., development of individuals, made possible by the time thus set free and the means produced for all of them" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 91; cf. Rojek, 1960).

What is at stake is the emergence of a new form of valuation that subjects economic determinations to the interest of free individuality, now a *directly social individuality*—not mediated by the exchange of independent private producers—that dialectically expands its wealth of needs and capacities. Consequently, once capitalist private property has been sublated, *available time* will become the *measure of wealth*:

> then, on the one hand, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual; and, on the other, society's productive power will develop so rapidly that, although production will now be calculated to provide wealth for all, the [*available*] *time* of all will increase. … Then wealth is no longer measured by labour time but by [available] time. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 94)

In the economy of capitalism, "labour time as a measure of wealth" subjects the life of the producer to the eagerness for accumulation, that is, "the whole time of an individual is posited as labour time, and he is consequently degraded to a mere labourer, subsumed under labour" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 94). Communism, on the other hand, offers another measure. In the measure of available time, a "real economy" consisting in the "saving of labour time" expressed in the "reduction to the minimum" of production costs would be settled (*Grundrisse II*, p. 97), which implies the development of the productive forces. However, this expectation should not be interpreted as the reduction of necessary labour time in terms of some Adamic "damnation of labour." Beyond this necessary labour time, there is the possibility of a *free labour time.* In this line, it is not a bet for renouncing to the generation of wealth or an asceticism contrary to the enjoyment of it:

> Hence in no way *renunciation of enjoyment* but development of power [or of the forces], of the capacity to produce and hence of both the capacity for and the means of enjoyment. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 97)

The free labour here outlined sublates the necessity for exchange between independent private producers and makes possible the "full development of the individual" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 97) on the basis of what the culminating shapes of capitalist exchange made possible by articulating the human productive powers. Likewise, the costs inherent to the capitalist division of labour in the forms of the circulation of commodities would be saved (cf. *Grundrisse II*, p. 21), which raises the issue of the *superiority* of the communist society. The conviction at stake is that wealth will become greater where the development of the productive forces is not hindered by the relations of production, for it presupposes its own unconditional development made possible by the preceding evolution (cf. Harvey, 2017, pp. 341–342). But this superiority cannot be reduced to the calculus of the *greatest quantities* of goods produced but has to contemplate the extent to which the new established relations allow free labour to be the *self-realization of individuals* (cf. della Volpe, 1977, pp. 84–90). It is not a merely technical matter, but an anthropological and social one about the terms in which human beings can self-realize once

the "practical-abstract forms"[4] that organize the sociality of capital have been sublated, moving on to promote the cultivation of a multilateral personality.

Money, on the other hand, is the negation of such a cultivation. Money consists in the "possession of something devoid of individuality," (*Grundrisse I*, p. 154), where every concreteness of its products and every personality of its producers is worthless. It would thus be an *abstract infinity* that constitutes the negation of the concrete interests of particular subjects. In Hegelian terms, social relations around money can be understood as a variety of the "bad infinity" that dominates civil society. In Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, it is inscribed in the "system of needs" apropos of the incontinence of particular subjects (cf. Hegel, 2008, § 185 and Addition), where—Marx would add—money is the mediation par excellence of that overflow insofar as it serves capital. At the same time, through its abstract universality, money makes possible the opening of "the real sources of wealth," disposing individuals to a "limitless" industriousness that can assume "any form that serves the aim" (*Grundrisse I*, pp. 156–157). This ingenuity is an active potential instituted from the practical-abstract form of money. Through the articulation and interdependence made possible by money, human resources are expanded to meet social needs; even more so, when money takes the form of capital in modern societies (cf. *Capital I*, pt. II). In this way, as a *sublated condition* in the communist society, money establishes the historical conditions for a deployment of wealth attentive to the requirements of a personality which would be neither submitted to the law of value and the needs of capitalist accumulation, nor to the private labour which is its foundation. Rather, such a personality would be defined as diversity inscribed in productive activity (capacities) and consumption (needs). Money contributes, then, to the historical possibility of an enriched personality that assumes its

[4] By "practical-abstract forms," we understand the patterns of formal universality inherent to the organic reproduction of the capitalist mode of production; specifically, the needs of the capitalist circulation. This universality is presented as the detachment from and submission to particular determinations and interests. It is not a merely conceptual form, but an *alienated mode of praxis*. Thus, in the field of political economy, *value, money,* and *capital* stand out; in the domain of politics, we find *citizenship* and *rights*; in the domain of ideology and culture, *commodity fetishism* and its associated representations. These are practical phenomena that organize social life and have been characterized by their *dissociative character* in relation to the concrete reality of particular subjects. By virtue of this dissociation, they appear as practical phenomena of an abstract nature.

social character and arranges its activity in free terms, i.e., voluntary and conscious according to the pattern of a post-class "human history."

Labour could be the realization of this personality according to what is established: (a) its "social character" and (b) its "scientific character and simultaneously general [in its application]," that is, "which appears in the production process not in a merely natural, spontaneous form, but as an activity controlling all natural forces" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 530). Free individuals in a communist society would be subjects that assume the social entrail of their individuality, exercising their conscious activity from this organic belonging to the common. Rational individuality thus remains a constitutive principle of communist subjectivity according to the vast traditions of philosophical modernity and of liberalism itself. Immediately, the negation of all liberalism is affirmed with radicality in the *belonging to the common* of such individuality. So how can the appropriation of available time by producers through the recognition of their reciprocal organic membership (negation of individual labour) go hand in hand with the enrichment of individuals in a communist society?

Under capitalism, individual labour was reduced to a reifying condition—merely subsumed (undifferentiated) in the social force of production—like that of any natural object—at least in the sense that the logic of capital characterizes these objects. The time available to the worker was immediately exchanged for the time needed by capital. The communist sublation of this double historical condition supposes the recovery of individual labour in terms of the development of human capacities and potentials through labour arranged as the multifarious activity of *directly social individuals* (cf. *Grundrisse II*, p. 210). With this, there emerges the demand for its voluntary and conscious management in community, where the time available is at the mercy of the self-development of the producers, which rules out the mediation of the exchange—or of commodity circulation—for the recognition of the social core of their productive activity.

The affirmation of the social individuality of human beings in communism is but the bet for the deployment of the *free personality of the producers*. In a negative sense, it is about them being *free from* the circumstance by which the social products of their activity oppose them as foreign powers establishing purposes that result in the self-negation of their producers. In a positive sense, it is rather about they being *free to* realize their particular aspirations in the context of a mode of production that has to be voluntarily and consciously managed in community. This

progress is consummated as the integration of the individual particularity in the belonging to the common, to the social universality from which the individual obtains his means of subsistence and realization, and toward which he delivers the product of his labour for his self-production. Let us delve into the dialectic that this personal singularity requires to realize itself as a *free individuality*.

2.2 The Affirmation of Difference

In our interpretation, Marxian communism outlines a *society of free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals* committed to the *deployment of personality* of particular subjects, as associated producers who make possible their joint reproduction. In Marx, the communist horizon assumes the modern cause of individual freedom but elevating it above the distinctive homogenizations of sociality and liberal culture; that is, it places itself outside the practical-abstract forms typical of commodity-capitalist societies. In pre-Marxist communism, from Babeuf to Weitling, egalitarianism had dominated (cf. Stedman Jones, 1984), a tendency not followed by Marx. We will now address the guidelines of this conception vindicating of personal differences, especially with regard to the dialectic between capacities and needs, mainly from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx, 1989) written in 1875. This political document exceptionally reveals some central aspects of Marxian political conceptions; this, not only regarding his valuation of political power in the forms of modern State, but also in terms of his perspective about the organization of a communist society. It is here that a mature Marx canonically sanctions once again for Marxist orthodoxy the expression "*revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 95) as a transitional political regime toward the communist organization of society. Likewise, it contains a radically anti-egalitarian sentence about the terms in which production and consumption should be organized in a communist society, what we may call *the principle of different right*: "From each according to his [capacities], to each according to his needs!" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87).

This document was not published until fifteen years after it was written—Marx himself had died almost a decade earlier—on the occasion of the Halle Congress of the German Workers' Party in 1890 (cf. McLellan, 1995, pp. 410 ff.). The Halle Congress set out to evaluate the *Gotha Programme*, approved at the Congress held in the German city of

the same name in 1875. The purpose of this Congress was to incorporate Lassalle's followers into the German workers' movement, whose members had hitherto followed a predominantly Marxist orientation. The occasion of this Congress led Engels to publish this document that was initially reserved for the purposes of the Gotha Congress (Engels, 1990, p. 93). Around 1875, when this congress took place, Marx did not have any executive responsibility in the party. Nevertheless, due to his condition of mandatory reference for the German socialism of that time, his opinion was requested by the leaders of the German Workers' Party. The result was a frontal criticism of the commitments in the name of the unity of the different socialist tendencies gathered at the Gotha Congress that were made in this document with the Lassalleans. Beyond the complexities of the strategic and tactical discussions of the German socialist movement and its process of unification, the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* offers decisive statements on the nature of Marx's emancipatory interests. For this reason, this document is extremely relevant for assessing the strength of his political bets, as well as the chiaroscuro of them in terms of the relation between political power and personal freedom.

Just a couple of years before that, Marx had ended his debate with Bakunian anarchists—in the General Workers' Association or Socialist International—with the feeling that certain theoretical consensuses and certain fundamental political bets had been duly established within the socialist-oriented workers' movement in Europe. In this context, Marx judged that the *Programme* of the German Workers' Party had conceded too much with respect to the revolutionary interests it should pursue. In his understanding, Lasalle's perspective—already dead by then—ended up prevailing, impregnating with liberalism the orientations of the German Workers' Party. All of which resulted in a peculiar articulation—promoted by Lasalle—between the interests of Bismarck's politics and the struggles of the working class.

The constant denunciation of Lasalle's postulations—now present in the program of the German Workers' Party—is in line with a radical lack of knowledge of the historical conditions that characterize the relations and institutions of capitalist society. For starters, the *Programme* begins stating that "[l]abour is the source of all wealth and all culture" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 81). A "bourgeois" conception—according to Marx—by virtue of which: first, Nature is abstracted as the source of use values; second, the difference between labour and labour power is overlooked, in particular, the relation between both, where the latter produces

the former. When Marx characterizes this conception as "bourgeois," he means that we are facing an ideological discourse that presents a social reality—the generation of wealth and culture—as if it had no conditions of generation. With this, it achieves the praise of those who, thanks to their property of the means of production, are in a position to make labour feasible. They hold this power because they have at their disposal the natural resources and the labour power necessary for the metamorphosis of the merely natural into use values or social wealth. By praising labour and its potential to produce wealth and culture outside its natural and social determinations, one proceeds according to a certain *naturalization of labour*, i.e., to its ideological mystification. By proceeding in this way, it is sanctioned and sanctified that those who make it possible for labour to be (control of the capitalist organization of labour), also be responsible for wealth to be (invisibility of Nature and labour power). Nature and the labour power are forgotten by this resource that has hidden their presence. Of course, this procedure is extremely convenient for the interest of the domination of private property over the producers, because from there it is legitimized that:

> the man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 81)

The criticism of this recourse to the naturalization of the ideological presumptions of capitalist society is a constant in this *Critique*. Thus, the liberal presumption of the universal equality of human beings is openly confronted—an issue of special interest to us. In fact, the egalitarian pretension of liberalism is confronted in several places throughout Marx's works. Marx denounces the unreality and emptiness of egalitarian aspirations, as well as the ignorance of the social world of inequality that the logic of capital produces as a necessary result of its immanent movement. Moreover, he criticizes this aspiration for the civilizing cynicism that is embodied in it: the sanctioning of a public equality that is the stage, the means, and the occasion for legitimizing the socio-economic inequalities that result from social domination under capitalist relations of production. Above both aspects of his critique of egalitarianism, something stands out from the anthropological viewpoint and in regard to

the finalist horizon of communism: Marx questions that the liberal eagerness for universal equalization among individuals can be included within emancipatory interests of human scope, being rather part of what we may call the *language of capital* and its ideological constructs. These interests would go beyond the merely political emancipatory horizon of class structures of domination, which end up crystallizing into the egalitarian forms of modern citizenship and its public domain in the bourgeois society.[5]

This issue reappears in the discussion about the First Section of the *Programme*. After the abstract reference to *labour* mentioned above, the *Programme* proposes that *society* should appropriate the "proceeds of labour": "*and since* useful labour is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with *equal right* [my emphasis] to all members of society" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 81). The vagueness of the meaning of "society" would allow the empty acceptance of a generic statement that can be perfectly embraced "*by the champions of the* [*S*]*tate of society prevailing at any given time*" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 82). Thus, the various instances of political and social domination (the State and property) could claim their *equal right* over the appropriation of the "proceeds of labour" on the understanding that, without them—without their power to viabilize social labour—there would be no wealth to be appropriated by society. A proposal of such generality assumes a kind of social isomorphism that obliterates the differences between all of its members—producers or otherwise—thus resulting in the commonplace that "society" appropriates its products. The differentiated terms of production and appropriation of wealth and culture are not taken into account, where—according to Marx's interpretation of distribution in the capitalist mode of production—the wealth and culture of those who do not work, but appropriate the social surpluses, coincide with the poverty and insecurity of the workers (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, pp. 81–82).

[5] In del Aguila (2020), I have argued the relation of mutual necessity between the production/circulation polarity of Marxian political economy and the public/private polarity that Marx addressed in his early writings of the *German–French Annals* (cf. *On the Jewish Question*, in Marx, 1975c, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in 1975a). In modern societies and in progressive liberal preaching, this leads to the sacralization of right and the defense of universal equality which becomes a decisive ideological value for the reproduction of capital.

The First Section of this *Programme* is divided into five points, the third of which deals with "emancipation of labour," "collective regulation of the total labour" and "fair distribution of the proceeds of labour." With respect to this fair distribution of the proceeds of labour among the producers of wealth, we once again come across a commonplace, already satisfied by the bourgeois horizon: "And is it not, in fact, the only 'fair' distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production?" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme,* p. 84) That is, the economic relations—expressed in money and forming a market that makes possible the exchange of independent private producers in capitalist society—*already are* equitable relations where one has to pay in the commodity exchange according to the pattern of general equivalence or exchange value. Accordingly, the pretension of equality would not be an emancipatory one of human scope that sublates the practice of the bourgeois order of domination, or the horizon already offered by the civilization of capital. Moreover, it is again an empty statement. After all, to whom does the *equal right* of property of the proceeds of social labour concern? Marx's puts it sardonically as follows:

> "To all members of society"? To those who do not work as well? What remains then of "the undiminished proceeds of labour"? Only to those members of society who work? What remains then of "the equal right" of all members of society? (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 84)

The *Programme* clearly falls on an indetermination that prevents it from advancing a social organization of distribution capable to sublate those alienating homogenizations of the human that are subject to the logic of capital.

Already in the Fourth Section of the *Programme*, the issue reappears concerning the management of public resources allocated to education, where Marx indicates how equality is celebrated at the expense of inequality in this dimension of state action. In the end, state action is based on a society of inequalities that give meaning to the juridical-political equalizations declared to be in its favor. Part B of this Fourth Section deals with the "the intellectual and ethical" bases of the State and, in its First Section, calls for: "Universal and *equal education of the people* by the [S]tate. Universal compulsory school attendance. Free instruction" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 96). For Marx, these are derisory

terms, decidedly naïve and inapplicable given the social conditions of education based on class inequalities. The irony follows immediately:

> Or is it demanded that the upper classes also shall be compulsorily reduced to the modicum of education—the elementary school—that alone is compatible with the economic conditions not only of the wage labourers but of the peasants as well? (*Critique of the Gotha Programme,* p. 96–97)

In short, the producers have no social capacity to participate in an education equal to that of the owners of capital and land. This, even despite all the well-intended statements that may be made on this subject from the public sphere or apropos of state policies. Moreover, if *equal* free instruction could be provided in public education, this could only be done as a form of subsidy ("another" form of subsidy, one would have to specify) by workers to non-workers. Marx cites the case of US public education, where the issue is especially palpable:

> The fact that in some states [of the United States of America] middle schools are also "free" only means, in reality, that there the upper classes are paid for their education at the expense of the general tax fund. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme,* p. 24)

Something similar occurs with the egalitarian aspiration in judicial litigation between the property classes, which would be financed by general taxes: "Are they to carry on their litigation at the expense of the national coffers?" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 97)

As we anticipated, the scope of the Marxian critique of the egalitarian horizons of modern citizenship is not limited to the mere realization that the equality it aspires to is simply unrealistic. More profoundly, it shows that the consummation of such a universal equality—as part of the achievements of *political emancipation*—is an active condition for social inequality (cf. del Aguila, 2011; Walzer, 1990), for instance, through the subsidies mentioned above. Moreover, it points out that such equalization is a condition of non-realization for the producers. That is, the negation of their freedom by means of capitalist domination, which rests precisely on practical-abstract forms of egalitarian character such as those that rule the domain of commodity circulation, including the buying and selling of labour power (cf. del Aguila, 2020).

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme,* this Marxian stance finds its climax: the point at which egalitarian aspirations are positively purged from the domain of *human emancipation*. This happens around the third paragraph of the First Section of the *Programme*, where Marx deals with the limitations of "bourgeois right." Our author maintains that, in the "first phase of communist society" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87), equality would continue to be the key to exchanges in a society of freely associated producers no longer submitted to capitalist private property. The underlying principle would be that each producer should receive from the community *the same* they would have contributed by means of their work. Already in the first volume of *Capital,* around the discussion of commodity fetishism, Marx referred to the "community of free individuals" considering labour time as a measure of the distribution of wealth, even if "merely for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities" (*Capital I*, p. 89). This would be a circumstance of *progress* insofar as there would be no appropriation of the alien labour and property would be limited to the means of individual consumption once private property of the means of production had been suppressed. Marx even argues that the illusions of equality inherent to the capitalist social order would be better realized:

> Hence, *equal right* here is still in principle—*bourgeois right*, although principle and practice are no longer at loggerheads … In spite of this advance, this *equal right* is still constantly encumbered by a bourgeois limitation. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 86)

This first phase certainly abandons the pattern of class differences that determine equality, so that it is nothing more than the detour through which the interests of the ruling classes are legitimized. However, it still cannot consider radically the fundamental condition by which producers are *individuals*; that is, *persons with different capacities and needs*. Even if it is no longer a mercantile variety—as it was the case with the law of value—taking labour as a standard of equality disregards, with respect to capacities, that:

> one man is superior to another physically or mentally and so supplies more labour in the same time, or can work for a longer time; and labour, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise

> it ceases to be a standard of measurement. This *equal* right is an unequal right for unequal labour. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 86)

The Marxian critique and its communist horizon thus abandon the egalitarian parameters that come from commodity logic. They do not start from a presumption of original equalization to assert that inequality must be sublated. Where equality is presented as the alternative to inequality, it is presumed—as shown by the theory of value and the practice of commodity intercourse—that there is an equal "something" of a qualitative character upon which to determine what is "more" or "less." Since no such qualitative identity is presupposed, the very meaning of equalization disappears (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 109). Communism, then, would not presuppose such an identity.

The sublation of social classes entails the sublation of the inequalities resulting from it. But the aspiration we present here does not affirm a sublation in the name of some renewed although impoverishing abstract equalization of the diversity of human capacities and needs. It is, rather, a bet for the wealth that individuals can know and provide for themselves as members of a community emancipated from social class domination: the affirmation of the singularity by which each person can contribute to the common for satisfying him or herself in the common. Here it is not claimed that someone "is more or less" or "is equal to all the others" according to the homogenizing pattern of money that decides the prospects of the human in its narrow quantitative terms. On the contrary, the abstract comparison collapses and reveals its meaninglessness once we pay attention to the different personal qualities (capacities and needs).

Against the possibility of integrating egalitarian causes into the horizon of human emancipation, Marx's position was defined from his early criticism of *crude communism* in the *Paris Manuscripts*: "This type of communism—since it negates the *personality* of man in every sphere—is but the logical expression of private property, which is this negation" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 295). To which is added the genealogical dismantling of its alienated root in the form of *envy*:

> The thought of every piece of private property as such is *at least* turned against *wealthier* private property in the form of envy and the urge to reduce things to a common level, so that this envy and urge even constitute the essence of competition. Crude communism is only the culmination

> of this envy and of this levelling-down proceeding from the *preconceived* minimum. (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 295)

This is accompanied by the rejection of the *cult of poverty* that is distinctive of crude communists:

> [Crude communism] has a *definite*, *limited* standard. How little this annulment of private property is really an appropriation is in fact proved by the abstract negation of the entire world of culture and civilisation, the regression to the *unnatural* simplicity of the *poor* and crude man who has few needs and who has not only failed to go beyond private property, but has not yet even reached it. (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 295)

Both envy and the cult of poverty, as egalitarian aspirations, would be reactive and failed solutions—prasing to a great extent what they should bring down—in the social struggles against the dominance of capital and the homogenizing monetary forms put at their service (cf. del Aguila, 2007).

In this critical perspective of the praise of equality—as dear to liberalism as to various socialist and anarchist traditions—it is fundamental to distinguish between "inequality" and "difference." The lack of this distinction is a constant when Marxist discourse, in its most vast orthodox or heterodox traditions, moves from the terrain of the critique of political economy—condemning there the homogenizations typical of the mercantile horizon present in the forms of value, exchange value, money, etc.—to the arena of political criticism and the horizon of the life in common under a communist society. Thus, as a consistent interpretation of the affirmation of *personal difference* is sought in Marxian works such as the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, counterfeit expressions appear inadvertently assuming the anthropological presumptions of liberalism and attempts to "correct" them are made. For example, this is the case with a contemporary author—of highly praised heterodoxy—such as Eagleton:

> Genuine equality means not treating everyone the same, but attending equally to everyone's different needs. And this is the kind of society which Marx looked forward to. (2011a, p. 104)

What would this "genuine equality" be? As far as we understand, equality is the formal identity in numbers or in the recourse to some

similar abstraction, but here it is claimed that such an equality actually rests on difference, on "everyone's different needs." That is, the qualitative difference is claimed to be the foundation of quantitative equality. We do not see how this is possible without falling into extreme conceptual laxity, that which does not distinguish between "the unequal"—dependent on the qualitative identity—and "the different"—from which no equality or inequality can be established. A laxity that is perhaps afraid of the sinful affirmation of personal difference; that is, of reintroducing with it a new resource favorable to social domination. Likewise, and beyond unquestionable good intentions, how could we deal in equal terms with what is different? If what is meant is that "equality for Marx exists for the sake of difference" (Eagleton, 2011a, p. 105), then—with all that remains to be clarified about the scope of such an equality—it would be better to leave aside "politically correct" expressions for the liberal understanding that—in our view—involves misleading conceptions: they express a horizon of civilization that is not that of communism but of capital and the political emancipation from it. Countless authors have attempted to give an account of such a "genuine equality" realizable in communism (cf. Prior, 2004, p. 59) that would be founded on personal conditions:

> The abstract equality of right engenders inequality. Equality is now a function of personal needs, such will be the basis of genuine freedom, located in what Marx understood in *Capital* as the "realm of freedom." (cf. Prior, 2004, p. 260)

But in that case, it would no longer be about equality, unless we assume that individuals can be *persons* without being different. Of course, the particularity of each capacity and need may be subject to quantitative measurement, but the interrelation that makes it part of collective life—the connection with other particularities of the natural and social world—cannot again be subjected to the old "Procrustean bed." The relations between persons will no longer answer to a "more" or a "less," according to the pattern of money or any other social abstraction, but to the *qualitative difference* that constitutes them, and from which their new relations should be organized.

From this recognition of personal differences in communism, Marx derives an implication of universal scope about the nature of right, inasmuch as it rests on egalitarian premises: "*It is, therefore, a right*

of inequality, in its content, like every right" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 86). The emphasis is Marx's. The point is the abstract nature of right; its essence consists in the application of an equal measure, but equality does not belong to the diversity of content that characterizes human beings as persons inscribed in certain social relations and circumstances. It is precisely because persons can distinguish *themselves* as particular subjects with their *own dispositions* that they can be considered—within the general framework of the Modern Age—as individuals:

> Right by its nature can exist only as the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable by an equal standard only insofar as they are made subject to an equal criterion, are taken from a *certain* side only, for instance, in the present case, are regarded *only as workers* and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, pp. 86–87)[6]

Therefore, the distribution of social wealth with regard to the contribution of workers to their production is not sufficient. That is, the measure of distribution based upon work does not know the particular richness of their concrete being that constitutes them as *persons* or individuals with their own determination.

> Besides, one worker is married, another not; one has more children than another, etc., etc. Thus, given an equal amount of work done, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, etc. (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87)

The different capacities of individuals have to be considered, therefore, in conjunction with the difference in their needs. Concerning right, this allows Marx to extract the abysmal and absolutely anti-legal formula for liberal understanding: "To avoid all these defects, right would have to be unequal rather than equal" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*,

[6] In favor of a non-egalitarian Marx stands out, in the American academy, the work of Richard Miller (1984), followed by criticisms such as that of Kai Nielsen (1987), which gathers previous works on a perspective of moral progress associated with egalitarian positions in Marx (cf. Gilbert, 1982).

p. 87). The German term "ungleich," which is translated in several parts of the quoted edition as "unequal," can also be translated—in our interpretation—as "different," in consideration of the difference not merely quantitative, but mainly qualitative. Consequently, according to our interpretation of the Marxian vindication of "free personality," right should be "different." In fact, it is not the case that communism, as a radically human undertaking, has to submit itself to the reduction of diversity and the richness of the human; much less if this is done according to a certain unit of measure (abstraction) that hides the particularity that it generalizes and that is thus arranged as an imposed and alienating universality.

Communist society would be, then, not only one where the proceeds of social labour would be directly appropriated by their producers. It is also the scenario of a *concrete freedom* where we would effectively consider the determinations that constitute what these producers are: subjects with different capacities and needs, which can only be duly harvested and satisfied as consider account the particularity that defines them.[7] Hence, in relation to the Second Section of the *Programme*, Marx denounces its vague claim for "the elimination of all social and political inequality" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 91), when the aim is to abolish the inequalities *determined by social classes*; that is, *these* inequalities, without this constituting an abstract and ahistorical vindication of some essential equality among human beings: "it ought to have been said [sic.] that with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 92).

As noted, Marx criticizes the generalities of the *Gotha Programme* about the "fair distribution of the proceeds of labour" among "all members." To begin with, who are "all the members" among whom the proceeds of labour should be redistributed? Certainly not "the equals": not all the members of society are workers, and this does not exclude them from the life in common (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 84). But, moreover, what is to be distributed (the "proceeds")? Again, the generality of the Lassallean influence results in a marked indetermination that Marx will try to clear up with some considerations on the nature of the appropriation of the proceeds of social labour in a scenario

[7] For an utilitarian reading of the *Critique of the Gotha Program* and its perspective of self-realization from personal difference, cf. Green (1983).

where the capitalist private property of the means of production would have been sublated.

In our author's terms, the *proceeds of social labour* to be distributed would go through several deductions. On a strictly economic level, deductions should be made for the means of production consumed, for the expansion of production, and for the reserve fund or insurance covering accidents and natural disturbances of economic cycles. In no case, can these deductions be made in an equitable manner, since they will respond to the particular circumstances of the diverse production processes (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, pp. 84–85). However, on top of these strictly economic deductions, others will be made of an administrative and social nature. The first ones refer to "*the general costs of administration*" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 85) that Marx assumes to be lower as the new social organization progresses, i.e., in consideration of the desired deployment of the productive forces already freed from the capitalist relations of production hindering them. The latter refers to the attention to collective needs related to basic services for producers and their families (education, health). As the communist organization of production aims to the most complete satisfaction of human needs, this series of deductions is expected to grow considerably before moving on to the individual distribution of the social product (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 85). These social deductions are made to gather the funds necessary for the subsistence of those disabled for work, which is the communist equivalent of welfare in class societies (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 85). In light of all these deductions and the difference of the persons who will consume the social wealth, it is clear that the Lassallean formula of "fair distribution of the proceeds of labour" by the workers is empty.

In capitalist market society, the independent private producers appropriate equivalents for their personal or productive consumption in a domain of circulation split from that of production where they contrapose one another. In communist society, on the contrary, the producers would not relate to their products as to a mass of independent objects and carriers of value by themselves with regard to exchange. Such a fetishistic mediation disappears, so that "individual labour no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labour" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 85). This being a *direct participant* of common labour by means of individual labours would have to develop initially from capitalist society, "which is thus in every respect,

economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth-marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 85). In the first moment, the homogenizing patterns of commodity-capitalist life will continue to rule the production and distribution of social wealth: "The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 86). Besides—adds Marx—this egalitarian distribution would no longer proceed only "*on the average*" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 86), as in the capitalist market governed by the law of value and the oscillations proper to circulation (the mediations of supply and demand in the determination of prices). Instead, it would proceed in strictly individual terms, which would suppose—as we advanced a moment ago—the most complete realization of the illusions of equality in this "first phase of communist society."

Although, for Marx, the communist horizon should transcend this "bourgeois" egalitarian limitation, it would be a sort of inevitable inheritance in the beginning. Thus, the limitations of right to make possible a full realization of the interests of freely associated producers are expressed by Marx in accordance with his classic considerations on the priority of the economic in the structural shaping of societies: "Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development which this determines" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87). The "bourgeois" homogenizing horizon could be sublated by fulfilling the previously alluded to *principle of different right*, a principle that will only find practical support where: (a) the subjection to the division of labour has been sublated, as a "natural division" that throughout history has subjected and unilateralized the transforming potentials of individuals; (b) the antagonism between manual and intellectual labour has been, consequently, sublated; (c) labour is the "life's prime want" of the producers (condition of personal realization) and not a mere "means" of life; and (d) the integral development of the individuals potentiates, even more, that of the productive forces, "and all the springs of common wealth flow more abundantly" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87). It is not a small task to characterize each one of the conditions of this communist horizon that Marx sketched only in a general way.

Since the *Paris Manuscripts* of 1844 and their problematization of *estranged labour* (cf. pp. 270–282), Marx has permanently denounced the paradoxical condition by which the essential mode of human praxis—the transforming activity of Nature through which means of subsistence are

obtained and needs are satisfied—results in the negation of the producers themselves. The decisive aspect of the Marxian claims about human freedom is played out around this issue. Hence, communism should mean the sublation of the *unilateral patterns* of organization of social labour (e.g., the *practical-abstract forms of* capitalism) that negate the free activity of the producers. Shortly thereafter, the issue is presented in *The German Ideology*—in the controversy with Stirner on the unrestricted eagerness of the "Ego"—regarding the bet for an *integral human deployment* and against the conditions that decide the unilateral cultivation of human qualities:

> ⟨In general⟩, it is an ⟨absurdity to assume⟩, as Saint ⟨Max does⟩, that one could satisfy one ⟨passion⟩, apart from all others, that one could satisfy it without at the same time satisfying *oneself*, the entire living individual. … If the circumstances in which the individual lives allow him only the ⟨one⟩-sided development of one quality at the expense of all the rest, ⟨if⟩ they give him the material and time to develop only that one quality, then this individual achieves only a one-sided, crippled development. No moral preaching avails here. And the manner in which this one, pre-eminently favoured quality develops depends again, on the one hand, on the material available for its development and, on the other hand, on the degree and manner in which the other qualities are suppressed. (*The German Ideology*, pp. 262–263)

The conditions for the unilateral development of individuals would therefore be decided by the "natural division" of labour and its dispositions always prone to specialization and the enclosure of productive vital activity. According to its pattern, productive praxis is neither reconciled with its products nor with its activity itself, according to the "blind" procedure characteristic of it (cf. *The German Ideology*, pp. 44–47). Sublating the "natural division" of labour implies, then, to adhere to the multifarious diversity of the human potentials so that the condition of producer does not limit the *personal condition*, but that it rather becomes the mode of its widest realization. In this sense, the consideration of interindividual differences is paramount.

For the rest, the bet under consideration does not suppose the abandonment of any division that social labour may require in order to viabilize itself, but rather to arrange it so that—within the natural and social limits that correspond to identify and assume—it serves this personal

condition and its requirements. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx uses the expression "division of labour" for mercantile society, while for communist society he uses "organization of labour" (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 107–108). The first supposes social classes; the second, their abolition and a mere technical division of productive activities. In this regard, we can put forward two considerations to represent the implications of this form of social organization: (a) it would be no *impoverishment* of the productive potentialities of labour; on the contrary, it would be enriched with the deployment of the omnilateral potentials of an humanity emancipated from the unilateralism of capitalist labour market; hence, a humanity better placed for the flexible cultivation of the available capacities; (b) unless one falls back on an abstractly undifferentiating consideration of the activity of individuals, it seems inevitable to define productive social allocations in function of their particular abilities. From the latter, we can infer the shape of a "human division" of labour. In effect, before the *termination* of the division of labour once commodity exchange has been liquidated, we would be placed in a different organization of labour: one that starts from the consideration that, as persons, we are not (nor could we be) equal—"and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal"—if we really are persons; and nor would it be efficient for communist productivity that "everyone does everything."

Sublating this "natural division" of labour that does not conform to the interests of the producers—as dispositions to personal realization—but rather negates them, implies confronting the historical culmination of that division: the division between manual and intellectual labour. This is a key dimension of social antagonisms, even more fundamental than class antagonisms (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1).[8] In any case, it turns out that, by means of class antagonism, certain modes of productive praxis are fixed to be realized by certain social sectors—i.e., the manual producers—while others are given the possibility of "being free from" the

[8] Maguire points in this direction by distinguishing—although in an imprecise way we would say—division of labour as a "more basic" form of "alienated human activity" (Maguire, 1978, p. 224) and, much more precisely, on the side of the rupture of the primitive community and the irruption of the fortuity of what—following Marx—we call here "natural history." Division of labour would be "the way in which, once the 'strong but narrow' bonds of the primitive commune have been transcended, society takes on the form of a complex of uncoordinated individual activities, where each individual follows the logic of his particular situation, and nobody has an overall plan of the totality" (Maguire, 1978, p. 224).

immediately "manual" varieties of labour—i.e., the intellectual producers. Thus, intellectual labour is a socially privileged mode of being, both from its position in the productive processes and in consumption; that is, in the enjoyment of wealth and culture, which contravenes the universal sense of Marx's communist bet (cf. Heller, 1976, pp. 104–106).

Once producers can recognize themselves in their activity instead of being negated in and by it, labour can become what—according to Marxian anthropology—could accomplish: *realization of our multiple productive dispositions*. Labour then abandons the condition of damnation as is usually experienced on the horizon of capitalist civilization and the preceding modes of production throughout "natural history." It becomes *life's prime want*, the scenario of the realization of personal dispositions and, therefore, that without which no person can be what he properly is: a free transforming agent that produces and humanizes the natural world, turning it into his own "*inorganic* body" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 275). In the terms of the *Paris Manuscripts,* this would reaffirm the essential condition of the human species as a species that is realized in labour; a condition only known negatively under the horizon of estrangement (cf. *Paris Manuscripts*, pp. 275–278).

Now, these determinations of a possible communist society do not only suppose a development of the productive forces that would allow this radical richness and flexibility of social labour as an exercise of *personal realization*. Likewise, this very realization should be a condition for such productive forces to deploy more intensely "the all-round development of the individual" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87). Indeed, the producers would not flee labour "like the plague" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 274), but would find in it the opportunity of their own personal realization to which they would give the best of their potentials and energies. In this way, a peculiar dialectic between needs and capacities would be formed, which is expected to guarantee the viability of the joint model of this society. Its articulation is essential for the prospects of communism.

Under a dialectic between capacities and needs taking place beyond the fetishism of the culture of capital, the producers will be able to assume the leading role hitherto unknown to them:

> Every individual possesses social power in the form of a thing. Take away this social power from the thing, and you must give it to persons [to exercise] over persons. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 95)

Even if it is only in passing, one must note here the difference with Engels' classic call about the passage from "government of persons" to "administration of things" (1989, p. 321). Later on, we will see that there is a wide convergence between Marx's conception of political power in a communist society and Engels' "administrative" perspective of the management of the life in common. For our part, up to this point, we have that the sublation of the practical-abstract forms of capitalist society and of the personal negations of the "natural division" of labour would make possible the individual realization through the collective control of the development of human potentials. The ideal of human emancipation would become an effective practical movement:

> The all-round realisation of the individual will only cease to be conceived as an ideal, a vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the [capacities] of the individual is under the control of the individuals themselves, as the communists desire. (*The German Ideology*, p. 292)

To this end, the settlement of communism involves both affirmation and negation. It supposes, in effect, the dialectical culmination of certain historical shapes that, at some point in the development of the productive forces—would give way to their own expiration and reconversion into new relations and forms of social organization. The affirmation that results here operates in the Hegelian manner, by way of *determinate negation*.[9] In Hegel's terms, not everything that has been traversed by the *Spirit*—by Marxian *social history*, can *simply pass to the other side*, to the new mode of production and the new horizon of civilization, once the revolutionary crisis that unlocks its realization culminates. Likewise, neither are the negations absolute and, rather, certain social determinations remain in the constitution of the new shapes to be consummated as indispensable elements for the constantly renewed terms of social reproduction whose bases are but the result of the preceding historical development.

In its turn, Marxian communism deals with the tension between *what it leaves behind* and *what it keeps with it*, as a result of the *culmination* of the capitalist mode of production. A culmination that is its highest

[9] Cf., for example, § 192 of Hegel (2010), on the "syllogism of necessity," which has singularity as its average, or § 204 on the notion of purposiveness.

degree of development, as well as its own termination. Certain points of departure of capitalist social organization—such as the promotion of the freedom and wealth of individuals or the development of the productive forces—appear as those social phenomena in whose dialectical route some determinate negations would be experienced that would radicalize them and/or deepen them in a communist society. However, alongside with this dialectical course of the sublation (*Aufhebung*), the Marxian representation of communism knows another procedure: that of the abolition (*Abschaffung*) or absolute liquidation of certain social forms. Let us now consider how Marx finally came up with the assertion that communism, as an emancipated community, would be a society where the *contingency of the political forms of organization of social life* would become manifest. In this society, it would be possible to get rid of that whole dimension of human activity which up to now—according to Marx's view—would have been justified exclusively *because* of the demands of class domination, i.e., the political dimension of social activity.

2.3 Communism and Its Negations

According to *The German Ideology*, communism sentences the end of "natural history"—as we have described it—and establishes the opening to a radically different pattern of structuring for social history, now shaped as "human history" (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1). The associated producers would then freely bond with their activity and its results in order to voluntarily and consciously dispose of them. The *control of the community* takes the place previously assigned to capitalist property (private interest dissociated from the common interest) and the fortuity of world market. The distinctive naturalization patterns of class societies would give way to a relationship between the producers and their productive forces now *placed* as their own vital forces. In such a scene, the products of human labour could not be lost in some mediation—as capitalist circulation—that would prevent them from appearing as *their* social product. The productive forces would then become effective conditions for the personal realization of the producers.

It is widely known that the Marxian characterizations of communist society are usually general and/or indirect. The main thrust of Karl Marx's mature works was aimed at understanding the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production, rather than at elaborating a finished representation—otherwise largely problematic for historical, political, and

epistemic reasons—of the societal form that was to succeed it. Nevertheless, in accordance with what we have been saying, this work offers some positive elements about what that society would be. Like the *Grundrisse* or the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, *The German Ideology* is a privileged place in the Marxian corpus for identifying some explicit expressions relevant to our problem.

First, let us consider here the overriding determination for distinguishing between "natural history" and "human history"; the conception of communism as that sociality that assumes a *conscious control* of the social powers (*The German Ideology*, pp. 51–52). Since the apparition of large-scale industry, the viability of each individual depends directly on the entire world, whose world-historical cooperation makes possible the satisfaction of their needs (cf. Garaudy, 1967, pp. 105–106). In communism, such a cooperation could no longer be given from an unforeseeable immanence (i.e., the capitalist market) or—if that were the case—foreseeable according to patterns "not decided" by the producers (i.e., the capitalist organization of production). These patterns would be rather oppressively imposed on them. In this sense, "control" means "consciousness and will articulated to organize their own practical life conditions." From where human consciousness is realized as a conscious practice and the Marxian perspective of communism seeks to move away from the utopian varieties of human emancipation:

> Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which [sublates] the present state of things. (*The German Ideology*, p. 49)

The reality of this movement is, then, *also* the consciousness that arises from the possibilities unlocked by the historical conditions developed by the capitalist division of labour; not the *abstract* transcendent speculation about "what mankind is," "what it ought to be," or how it should organize itself to realize this "ought to be." Then, it is not about finding some ideal formula for it, but about realizing such a practical organization of a humanly emancipated life in common from the conscious will of the associated producers and their historical circumstances.

Faced with the perspective of a utopian consciousness detached from social necessity, the Marxian bet assumes the leading role of consciousness

insofar as it comes from and constitutes the effective historical movement. Its highest practical potential would be its capacity to *design* the forms of reproduction of one's own conditions of life and to assume every historical presupposition as produced by the praxis of mankind:

> Communism differs from all previous movements in that it overturns the basis of all earlier relations of production and intercourse, and for the first time *consciously treats all naturally evolved premises* as the creations of hitherto existing men, strips them of their natural character and subjugates them to the power of the united individuals. (*The German Ideology*, p. 81, my emphasis)

According to Marx, the conditions for such a control are the emergence of the "dispossessed mass" and the decisive beginning of world history; from whence "the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes wholly transformed into world history" (*The German Ideology*, p. 51). The leading role of the conscious will of individuals to make "natural history" a "human history" but the sublation of the chance and fortuity that the "natural division" of labour presents for the individual existences. To a great extent, it is about the leading role of self-determination, or understanding communism as "the project through which voluntary action seeks to universalize the conditions for voluntary action" (Hallward, 2010, p. 117). By virtue of such a sublation, the producers would be able to voluntarily and consciously decide the terms on which to organize their own activity. Thus, they would proceed to sublate the forms of organization that would have made their activity a unilateral and impoverishing arrangement. This is how it is formulated in one of the classic positive characterizations of Marxian communism:

> whereas in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. (*The German Ideology*, p. 47)

Beyond the irony about the neo-Hegelian interlocutors to whom *The German Ideology* is addressed, this would be the communist alternative to

the "natural division" of labour; defined in negative terms as liquidation of the "exclusive sphere" of activities and positively as possibility for the deployment of one's personal capacities and needs. This is a circumstance that goes far beyond the possibilities offered by the class structures of the preceding modes of production, and that supposes the breakdown of the historical foundations of the division between "the manual" and "the intellectual."

Of course, in such a characterization of the organization of labour, the articulation of the particular and the common abruptly reaches high degrees of complexity. The *regulation of general production* by society should be responsible for defining, through its conscious will, the forms of social reproduction and organization. This is to make it possible for the varied range of *needs* to be satisfied, while at the same time efficiently harvesting the diverse *capacities* that produce the whole of social wealth. Furthermore, with this, the diversity of individuals already appears as *wealth*. It will not be the wealth that takes the form of private labour, or that consumes, treasures, and accumulates according to a pattern of interrelation that contraposes the cooperators among themselves. It would be, rather, the individual wealth of a mode of productive activity that both promotes the achievements of the rest of the producers and harvests them for their own satisfaction. A dynamic where activity (deployment of capacities) and product (for the satisfaction of needs) would abandon, in social terms, the form of externalization.

Managing this complexity is the remaining practical challenge. It would have to deal with the difference in the conscious wills of the particular subjects who belong to the same community. For the time being, it should be emphasized that this mode of activity of the associated individuals—in a conscious and voluntary cooperation—would dispose them for an effective appropriation of the human products. Under capitalism, such products were the result of a universal activity that could not be universally appropriated by their producers (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 51). This appropriation is the satisfaction of their material and spiritual needs. The viability of the process depends on the dialectic of this satisfaction with the development of human capacities; that is, the consideration of this ensemble of needs and capacities is the insistence on the decisive recovery of the *individuals as such individuals*:

> Only at this stage does self-activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off of all natural limitations. (*The German Ideology*, p. 88)

That is to say, of a blind existence that does not know that its activity and products belong to it and that they are represented as something foreign. Therefore, the "transformation of labour into self-activity corresponds to the transformation of the previously limited intercourse into the intercourse of individuals as such" individuals (*The German Ideology*, p. 88). The sense of this articulation between the particular and the common lies in the fact that the individual's own activity does not counteract the common appropriation. From there on, "the isolation of individuals and each person's particular way of gaining his livelihood have themselves become accidental" (*The German Ideology*, p. 80); its dissociation—the dissociation between individuals—leaves the form of social necessity and is revealed in its historical contingency. In contrast, in "natural history," all forms of relationship and community between individuals were fortuitous.

Throughout the history of the division of labour, the *immediate naturalness* was being progressively abandoned, although in a contradictory way. On the one hand, there was an increase in the (negative) freedom from the natural original determinations of labour. On the other hand, there was an increase in the subjection of productive activity to the development of naturalized social powers that took the form of unsurpassable material powers (cf. *The German Ideology*, pp. 64–74). Thus, the progressive abandonment of "the natural" throughout the history of the productive forces meant by itself the development and consolidation of a life subject to social domination and contraposed to the diverse dispositions of the personality of the individuals. In turn, the negation and abstraction of personal life under large-scale industry and the world market would mean—at the end of the process—the historical determination that would make possible the relationship of *individuals as such individuals*. In the *Grundrisse*, the issue appears as the culmination of the historical *stages* of the realization of personality and freedom (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 95), which has also been interpreted as a process of individuation (cf. Maguire, 1978, pp. 212–213).

The end of this process and the beginning of "human history" is the abandonment of what remains "natural" in labour (cf. *The German*

Ideology, p. 88), as well as the end of the emptying of meaning in individual life. In this, the dynamics of *continuity* and *rupture* with the preceding activity are combined. On the one hand, labour cannot be "abolished" as a transforming activity of Nature in order to viabilize the human species. On the other hand, it puts an end to the condition whereby labour is a means of social domination, as well as to the one whereby producers are doomed to be but an abstraction of themselves. It would not be a matter of returning to some *originality lost*, in the style of most utopias. It would be, rather, the opening to a constantly renewed mode of being, consciously and voluntarily produced by one's own praxis, free of the vital self-impositions and dissociations that proceeded from their "blind" way of operating. Of course, the underlying anthropological framework is here forcefully presented: the notion of something of our *own* that is finally achieved in the form of a renewal of the very human activity that transforms Nature and itself. In this way, human beings would *really* be what they are outside of their subjection to the "natural division" of labour: free to deploy their personality through the practical exercise of their consciously assumed will.

It is a circumstance that redefines the relationship of mankind with the world of objects, at least as socially significant in practice; that is, transformed by productive activity. "Human history" would cancel out the representation that turned the products of social efforts into independent naturalized potentials or autonomized objectivities by virtue of a limited mode of exchange. Rather, it would make the human world *one world*—one reconciled with Nature as its own "*inorganic* body" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 275), conciliating productive activity and its results:

> The reality which communism creates is precisely the true basis for rendering it impossible that anything should exist independently of individuals, insofar as reality is nevertheless only a product of the preceding intercourse of individuals. (*The German Ideology*, p. 81)

From these elements it can be argued that sublating the "natural division" of labour makes possible *personal freedom*, which can only be realized within a given communal belonging:

> The transformation, through the division of labour, of personal powers (relations) into material powers, cannot be dispelled by dismissing the

> general idea of it from one's mind, but can only be abolished by the individuals again subjecting these material powers to themselves and abolishing the division of labour. This is not possible without the community. Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community. (*The German Ideology*, pp. 77–78)

Since the appropriation by the community of the material powers or forces of production as *social powers* is here at stake, the leading role of the "material powers" would have to give way to personal freedom. Beyond the liberal conception of freedom and its formal-negative character, the personal freedom here vindicated transcends the horizon of abstract individual rights functional to the reproduction of capital in order to assert, instead, a positive freedom inscribed in the concrete being of particular subjects and in their individual differences. Accordingly, communism would be the social scenario for positive freedom as self-realization (cf. Prior, 2004, pp. 185–192).[10] Whether immediately or somewhat later, this freedom supposes the life in common, since it is proper to a community of individuals who voluntarily and consciously associate to decide their own shared circumstance (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 78).

In ethical terms, the contrast with the liberal conception of individuality is palpable (cf. Eagleton, 2011b). The relationship between the individual and the common would abandon the form of reciprocal foreignness through the continuity by which the social forces of production respond to the interest of the subjects who set them in motion and dispose of their products. The real independence of the material powers from the interests of the producers is a result of class domination. Once this independence is sublated, the sacralized "free will" of liberal political culture would be revealed in all its abstraction and unreality. Individual freedom, on the other hand, becomes real, i.e., personal freedom, insofar as it positively assumes its conditions of realization; in particular, the community as its essential condition. In the communist horizon, the abysmal articulation between particular interests and the common interest would be the place where each individual would have to self-realize in

[10] On the contrary, cf. Kamenka (1972) for a perspective defending that Stalinist totalitarianism emerged from Marx's conceptions, with emphasis in his early work and from the framework of the Cold War.

and from the association with his peers (we do not say "their equals") members of the community.

The end of the process of "natural history" in the form of a "human history," thus, supposes that all relationships be established voluntarily and consciously by the associated producers, which would lead—now in the words of the *Grundrisse*—to a "real social communality" (*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*):

> The mutual dependence must first have developed into its pure form, before there can be any question of a real social communality. All relations as posited by society, not as determined by nature. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 207)

Communism is, then, the culmination of the process whereby social history gradually detaches itself from its original naturalness in order to be *established* by human activity, or the point from which human activity is immediately and transparently established as *condition of itself*. The Marxian contraposition between "the natural" and "the human" is resolved in the achievement of that form of social organization where personal freedom can finally exist.

To this end, it is necessary to consummate certain *historical ruptures* that are essential and unavoidable if we are to establish the conditions for a humanly emancipated society. The first of these is the sublation of capitalist private property. It is not a matter of simply abolishing property, but of the determinate negation by which the private *appropriation of the means of production* is confronted. Private appropriation is then reserved for the *means of consumption*, while property of the means of production would become *common property* exercised by the freely associated producers (cf. Brenkert, 1979).

The Second Section of the *Communist Manifesto* ("Proletarians and Communists") formulates the explicit scope that the new horizon of a sociality emancipated from capital poses for private property. The attempt to express the "proletarian point of view" finds in that Section diverse negative characterizations of what it does not mean to be a communist. At the same time, it offers other positive ones of the objectives resulting from the historical necessity in which the proletariat would be inserted:

> The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of

> the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 498)

With the addition that these would not be mere ideals, but conscious expressions of the ensemble of "actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes"; all of which is summarized in the motto: "Abolition of private property" (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 498).

Regarding the various accusations that communists intend to abolish personally acquired property, the answer is that they cannot go against something *that does not exist precisely because of* the development of the capitalist private property that they oppose. This may be the case, either because that property was eliminated (the private property of the middle classes, artisans, peasants, etc.) or because it simply cannot be generated (in the case of the proletarians dispossessed of capital). As to the abolition of the family or the loss of culture, it is argued that the very dynamic of capitalism is the cause of these circumstances (cf. *Communist Manifesto*, pp. 500–501). Marx and Engels confront this paradoxical defense of private property by their antagonists:

> You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society.
>
> In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with *your* property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 500, my emphasis)

From where the conditions of appropriation of the products of proletarianized labour are expected to change, so that the existence of the producers will not be an appendix of the interest of capital, for example, in the form of the "industrial reserve army" which Marx would address years later in his economic writings (cf. *Capital I*, Section XXV.3). The relationship of the worker with the products of his labour would change radically:

> In bourgeois society, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In Communist society, accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 499)

The accumulated labour of the past would no longer subjugate the living labour of the present, while capital would lose its independence and the individual would regain his personality: "In bourgeois society capital is independent and has [personality], while the living person is dependent and has no [personality]" (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 499). The historical claim of this critique is specified, not as a negation of personality and freedom in general, but as a negation of the personality and freedom that correspond to its bourgeois mode of being, understood according to the confines of commodity logic to buy and sell everything, including the labour power of human beings. This critical negation would imply a *commitment to non-domination*:

> Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate [alien] labour by means of such appropriation. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 500)

In the same direction, after the experience of the Paris Commune, the *Civil War in France* proposes the abolition of private property of the means of production as "expropriation of the expropriators":

> The Commune, they exclaim, intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilization! Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 335)

It is likewise established the relation between the abolition of social classes—as a necessary result of the abolition of capitalist private property—and the reconciliation with identity in labour as a universal distinction of our species: "With labour emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute" (*The Civil War in France,* p. 334–335). According to the considerations we

have covered, the abolition of the private property of the means of production poses that peculiar *Marxian abyss* for the sublation of the "natural division" of labour, with its castes of idlers and workers, with its forms of labour that promote and negate personality, with its unilateralism and its inherent misery; in short, as a deep and multifaceted source of estrangement. A "human division" of labour would suppose that persons assume a leading role over things, or else, the "intercourse of individuals as such individuals" as established by *The German Ideology* (p. 88). This entails the negation of commodity circulation, the shaping of a system of production, distribution and consumption where the fetishistic route by which things "build social relationships with each other" (cf. *Capital I*, p. 78–79) outside the interests of freely associated producers is not necessary (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 467). All of which brings us back to the issue of what mode of production would be in accordance with the interests of personal freedom. By virtue of this personal freedom, we understand our distinction as a species capable of will and conscience, capable of sublating the dominance of socially produced chance as fortuitous conditions whose social genesis was continually lost sight of in "natural history." The power of supply and demand appears in the modern world as the great expression of this dominance of chance (*The German Ideology*, p. 49).

But the issue is not limited to the sublation of the capitalist private property of the means of production. Marx's approach assumes as a *historical necessity* that, alongside such a sublation, we must proceed to the *abolition of the political forms of organization of social life*. This is in accordance with the understanding that all political forms are but the result of the estranged terms of social organization in the framework of "natural history"; in particular, of the structures of domination based on private property of the means of production through their historical path. The conceptual sequence at play here assumes the domino effect by which the end of private property of the means of production will be followed by the disappearance of classes and, with it, the disappearance of politics, which originally emerged to make possible its domination. Thus, for example, personal freedom would be incompatible with the state forms of capitalism (cf. Rubel, 2003, pp. 194–212).

In this way, the foundation of the opposition of the individual and the common or of individuals among themselves—in the formal-negative structures of modern citizenship—would be that the cooperation between such individuals responds to the dissociation between the private and the

public. This dissociation is only one of the historical forms of that opposition and would lose its meaning once the horizon of private property of the means of production was sublated and, consequently, once social classes have disappeared. Here appears the commitment to sublate the contraposition between the individual and the common—carried out in the history of class societies—through the mystifying resources of the "general interest." In this regard, it can be seen that:

> what is called the "general interest," is constantly being produced by the other side, private interest, and in relation to the latter it is by no means an independent force with an independent history—so that this contradiction is in practice constantly destroyed and reproduced. (*The German Ideology*, pp. 247)

Communists would thus know that the truth of the particular is in the community. Nevertheless, in class societies, it appears in the mystified variety of the "general interest." It is thus a matter of denouncing the cover-up of the social particularity from which political universality is sustained. Marx's confrontation with the liberal perspective of the "general interest" is the root of what—in *The German Ideology*—is formulated as the topic of "illusory communities"; that is, political forms where the relation between the particular and the universal is distorted, so that a certain particularity split from the common becomes the fallacious representation of the universal.

> In the previous substitutes for the community, in the [S]tate, etc., personal freedom has existed only for the individuals who developed under the conditions of the ruling class, and only insofar as they were individuals of this class. The illusory community in which individuals have up till now combined always took on an independent existence in relation to them. (*The German Ideology*, p. 78)

The dissolution of the "general interest" would be achieved in communism: "In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association" (*The German Ideology*, p. 78). Personal freedom would become the *practical affirmation* of each member of the community; that is, of the associated producers, who would no longer dissociate their positive particular interests from those that take the form of the "general interest," either as State or as any political-institutional shape. The content and viability of individual interests would

be inscribed in a community that would make manifest the interest that concerns everyone, and where the human emancipation of each particular subject would find its place. Once abandoned the mystification of "general interest"—through the voluntary and conscious control of one's own social powers—the relinquishment of individual freedom to the fortuitous conditions that decide the exercise of liberal citizenship in the midst of the unpredictability of commodity-capitalist life would also cease:

> Up till now association … was simply an agreement about those conditions ["natural division" of labour], within which the individuals were free to enjoy the freaks of fortune. This right to the undisturbed enjoyment, within certain conditions, of fortuity and chance has up till now been called personal freedom. (*The German Ideology*, pp. 80–81)

According to the above, the communist organization of production should ensure that the conscious will of the associated producers satisfies the constantly renewed personal needs through the vast development of human capacities. To this end, the sublation of capitalist private property would suppose the abolition of the political dimension of social activity. In the next chapter, we will discuss the extent to which this differs from the dialectical sublation of politics as a social conditionality historically produced. According to our judgment, it is the characterization of an *abstract denial of the political dimension of social activity*, a denial that has serious repercussions on the emancipatory endeavors we have described so far. In effect, this perspective abandons the fate of the common to the fortuity of spontaneity, instead of allowing the effective and *rational* sublation of the socially contingent.

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CHAPTER 3

Marx and the Abandonment of Political Power

Wrote between late 1843 and early 1844—at almost the same time he wrote *On the Jewish Question* (Marx, 1975e)—the *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (*Introduction*, in Marx, 1975a) shows Karl Marx's original formulation of the scope and conditions of human emancipation, problematized from the circumstances of the German political scene of his time. The role of critical philosophy as a contribution of consciousness to the course of revolutionary events is decisively revealed, at the same time that appear some of the conceptual elements will form Marx's philosophy of history: the proletariat emerges as a revolutionary subject and the negative valuation of politics is made explicit in relation to the promotion of human freedom. From a comprehensive view of the Marxian work, this *Introduction* establishes fundamental points of departure for our investigation into Marx's conception of political power. These points of departure, which he will not abandon throughout his intellectual career, are: (a) the historical-philosophical topic that radical revolutionary changes against social domination should mean a sort of "total rupture" at the hands of a particular historical subject, the proletariat; and (b) the conception of human emancipation as a transcendent horizon for political emancipation, which would suppose the negation of "the political."

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It is crucial to consider the framework of discussion in which Marx is inscribed here as part of the neo-Hegelian left: the bet for the role that critique plays in viabilizing the aspiration for human freedom (cf. Bunzel & Lambrecht, 2011; Stedman Jones, 2016; Chapter 5). In this neo-Hegelian (cf. Löwy, 1972; Rubel, 1970; Chapter 2), and particularly Feuerbachian (cf. 2012, pp. 153–245), line, Marx proposes the emblematic opening sentence: "For Germany the *criticism of religion* is in the main complete, and criticism of religion is the presupposition of all criticism" (*Introduction*, p. 175). As in *On the Jewish Question*, religion appears here as an expression of a certain fracture and a certain human impotence that leads to the illusion that resolves in a transcendent and idealized way that which in one's own activity is always revealed as non-realization. Besides—it is now added—religion is also "the sigh of the oppressed creature" (*Introduction*, p. 175). The inadequacy of practical life to one's own expectations and needs would dispose human beings toward the fascination that consoles them by clouding their consciousness and enslaving them in forms of escape and irresistible evasion. As "*opium* of the people" (*Introduction*, p. 175), religion would be the expression and sigh of the practical tearing; and because of that, the demand of its opposite in order for the people to have "*real* happiness," which supposes that they "*give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*" (*Introduction*, p. 176; cf. Redding, 2011).

The conclusion of this criticism asserts the need to *abandon* religion. The dialectic of critique would dismantle the subterfuges of religious delusion to finally go "beyond" the experience of a consciousness incapable of assuming its practical conditions and its dissatisfaction. In this way, it intends to advance from the critique of religion to the critique of practical experience from which it would have originated, and which should also eventually be *abandoned*. In this way, it becomes clear what are the tasks of a critical philosophy committed to accounting for (a) the factual tearing in human relations, as well as for (b) the planes of conscious representation and social activity that should consequently be abandoned: "Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of* [*right*] and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*" (*Introduction*, p. 176). Shortly after, the fourth of the *Theses on Feuerbach* (Marx, 1976b) would propose that the "earthly family" is revealed as the secret of the "holy family," for which "the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice."

The setting for this critique is a Germany insistently characterized by our author as a social reality where the political realizations of freedom lag behind what nations like France and England are already experiencing, which makes revolutionary demands particularly problematic. In the face of this, the Marxian demand sustains a religious animus; it proposes the vindication of a certain "hereafter" characteristic of the negation that it abandons and leaves aside: "Its object is its *enemy*, which it wants not to refute but to *exterminate*" (*Introduction*, p. 177).

This critical neo-Hegelianism finds itself fascinated by the *emancipatory rupture* that ends up identifying its mission as a negative one whose task is to contrapose and reveal. In this way, it is expected to leave aside that humanly produced world that would not be favorable to the cause of freedom. Marx understands that this role is particularly commendable and pressing for the German philosophical consciousness. It is commendable, because it is in philosophy—especially in Hegel's philosophy of right—that Germany can be placed among modern peoples as a country that has turned into concept the most accomplished shapes of freedom. Let this be said in spite of the contradictions and ambiguities which—in Marx's opinion—would characterize this philosophy, and which would have been analyzed and exposed in the less frequently consulted and immediately preceding *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Marx, 1975b). It is pressing, because it is a circumstance that, without having achieved the liberal conquests of the most developed societies of its time, has to deal with the expiry of the aspirations that those societies already experience as consummate and problematic; that is, the forms of political emancipation. Thus, the criticism spurred on by the finalist horizon of the emancipatory rupture is situated in countries like France or Germany in different terms: "In France partial emancipation is the basis of universal emancipation; in Germany universal emancipation is the *conditio sine qua non* of any partial emancipation" (*Introduction*, p. 186). This is posed in relation to the emancipatory achievements that, thanks to universal citizenship, the bourgeois struggles in France had reached compared to the limited horizon of the German achievements. Faced with this disadvantageous condition for Germany, Marx's revolutionary impetus does not waver; rather, it seems to find renewed illusions and greater imperatives:

> It is not the *radical* revolution, not the *general human* emancipation which is a Utopian dream for Germany, but rather the partial, the *merely* political revolution, the revolution which leaves the pillars of the house standing. (*Introduction*, p. 184)

In this chapter, we will see that this neo-Hegelian imprint favorable to the abandonment of certain social forms of estrangement remains throughout Marx's work in the critique of politics as an estranged plane of social activity. The transcendence of human emancipation in political emancipation—the "religious animus" we referred to above—supposes a very singular drama where the political organization of modern societies would result in social forms that resolutely negate the human. In modern societies, a process of loss in which the radicality of the demand for freedom cannot be satisfied by some new variety of the already known social domination would culminate. The leading role of the proletariat in this circumstance would be decisive and responds to the following conditions: (a) its condition as a subject completely excluded from bourgeois freedom and justice; (b) the dissolution of society itself in its own existence; and (c) the need to recover itself, which cannot but be the recovery of the world that has excluded it from the conditions of well-being produced by it. The latter supposes the absolute negation of all the social instances from which it was excluded, decisively including the political dimension of human activity, right, and citizenship. This is how Marx's line of argumentation that bets for the "abolition of the State" is set. The anthropological basis is not difficult to find in the early writing to which we now refer, and it features one of our author's classic sentences:

> To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself. … The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest being for man*, hence with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being. (*Introduction*, p. 182)

In this spirit alluding to Kantian unconditionality, the "general emancipation" requires the rupture by which the products of estrangement, engendered under the horizon of bourgeois private property and all its legal-political varieties, are abandoned. Only in this way would the "return of man over man himself" be consummated, which is but the end of the practical unfoldment in which his world became external to him. The perspective of the emancipatory rupture, early affirmed in the *Introduction*, is at the base of the conception—classically expounded in *The German Ideology* (pp. 46–48, in Marx & Engels, 1976b)—of the State

as an "illusory community" that must be abolished. The State appears there as a material power where it is consummated the negation by which human activity (a) has lost control of itself and (b) has been left to the fortuity of what the so asserted social domination has to offer to it.

Social domination—which takes the political form and material power of a *State*—results from class struggle, which in turn refers us to the environment where it takes place, i.e., a certain division of labour. The political dimension of social activity is here presented as a *product* and *result*, in the same way as the dynamics, shapes, and conflicts it may experience:

> It follows from this that all struggles within the [S]tate, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms—altogether the general interest is the illusory form of common interests—in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. (*The German Ideology*, pp. 46–47)

Here, what is properly real is the productive activity. The political dimension and its state forms would be, rather, a necessary result of social domination, but in the end an inessential phenomenality in view of the horizon of human emancipation. That is, under the rule of the social classes, the community is not the "real social community" (*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*)—alluded to in the *Grundrisse I* (pp. 207, in Marx, 1986a)—in the political dimension, but the appearance of a real community. Far from reconciling the interest of the particular and the interest of the common, the latter appears rather hypostatized through the tearing by which certain particularity rises and manages to be presented as a universality that is valid for everyone. It is but an abstract representation that conceals the content, the positive interests, on which it is based. Thus, within the framework of social classes, the *illusory general interest* of the ruling classes is asserted through the State. The fallacious representation of its universality allows this interest to take the reifying form of independence from particular interests (cf. *The German Ideology*, pp. 46–48).[1]

[1] Note that, at this point, Marx establishes particularity in the primacy of individuation, where the real interests are the interests of the individuals who interact conflictingly in that

The bet for the definitive overthrow of the State does not allow for further nuances. By means of it, the subjection and self-negation of the personality of particular subjects would conclude, so that it would now turn to assert itself. This conception is presented very early in Marx's work in his *Critical Marginal Notes* (Marx, 1975c) on the article "The King of Prussia and Social Reform" published by *Vorwärts!* in 1844:

> The *contradiction* between the purpose and goodwill of the administration, on the one hand, and its means and possibilities, on the other hand, cannot be abolished by the [S]tate without the latter abolishing itself, for it is *based* on this contradiction. (*Critical Marginal Notes*, p. 198)

That is, the contradiction between public and private life, between general interests and particular interests. The State would be constituted by these inherent contradictions that would condemn its efforts, in the midst of "the unsocial nature of this civil [bourgeois] life" (*Critical Marginal Notes*, p. 198). Thus, any good will favorable to the common interest would only know its failure because "*impotence* is the *law of nature* of the administration" (*Critical Marginal Notes*, p. 198). The very bases that sustain the existence of the State lead it back, time and again, into the misrepresentation of the universal in the form of the general interest, since the society that has produced it is founded on this fundamental contradiction. According to this approach, only the total negation of this preceding negation would result in a real emancipation.

> Thus [proletarians] find themselves directly opposed to the form in which, hitherto, the individuals, of which society consists, have given themselves collective expression, that is, the [S]tate; in order, therefore, to assert themselves as individuals, they must overthrow the [S]tate. (*The German Ideology*, p. 80)

Likewise, within the framework of the extreme dissolution (*Auflösung*) of the human in the shape of the proletariat, there would no longer be room for the partial recovery of one's own personality. On the road to a *total recovery*, and on the way to the dissolution of the political dimension

scenario. All this is in accordance with the Hegelian approach to the distinctive elements of civil society (cf. Hegel, 2008, §§ 182–187).

of human activity, the proletariat would resort to personifying the general interest as a *tactically necessary means*:

> Further, it follows that every class which is aiming at domination, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, leads to the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination in general, must first conquer political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which in the first moment it is forced to do. (*The German Ideology*, p. 47)

Soon, we will deal with the consummation of this "first moment" in terms of a "dictatorship of the proletariat." For now, let us note that in the *General Rules and Administrative Regulations of the International Working Men's Association* (Marx & Engels, 1988b) of 1871—more than a quarter of a century after *The German Ideology*—the exercise of political power by the proletariat appears as a duty:

> The lords of land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defence and perpetuation of their economical monopolies, and for the enslavement of labour. The conquest of political power has therefore become the great duty of the working class. (1988b, p. 243)[2]

Hence, when confronted with the anarchists' ambitions for the *immediate* abolition of the State (before having abolished social classes), Marx and Engels pointed out:

> Anarchy, then, is the great war-horse of their master Bakunin, who has taken nothing from the socialist systems except a set of labels. All socialists see anarchy as the following programme: once the aim of the proletarian movement, i.e., abolition of classes, is attained, the power of the State, which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions. The Alliance [the Bakunian organization] reverses the whole process. (*Fictitious Splits in the International*, p. 121, in Marx & Engels, 1988a; cf. Angaut, 2013)

[2] See the more dimmed and chiaroscuro character of influence that Marx had on the English labour movement between 1850 and 1880 in Jones (1984).

Against this, Rubel has maintained Marx's closeness to anarchism, establishing that the Marx critical of politics (focused on the contraposition between public and private man) is previous to the one critical of political economy (concerned with socio-economic alienation and domination); Marx would thus have been an anarchist before than a communist (cf. Rubel, 2003, p. 240 passim). Also, Karatani (2005, p. 18) explores this closeness from the cooperative organization of production; that is, formulating Marxian communism as an association of cooperatives halfway between Bakunin and Lasalle.

Once the proletariat manages to dispense with this means, the associated producers could proceed to a *universal appropriation* of their product that dispenses with the political dimension of social activity. Through the strengthening of the socialist economy led by it, the State would make itself superfluous in Engels' and Lenin's later discussions about its perishing via a progress toward its self-dissolution (cf. Bloch, 1980, pp. 230–231; Vincent, 1993, p. 386). Thus, the conditions will be established for the communion of human efforts and the realization of particular interests no longer distorted as "general interests." The possibility of harmonizing particular interests—so that the appropriation by the associated producers is effectively universal and that the class differences that could still persist in the proletariat be progressively dissolved (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 88)—is thus asserted in favor of a representation of communism as a fundamentally economic organization:

> Its organisation is, therefore, essentially economic, the material production of the conditions of this unity; it turns existing conditions into conditions of [association]. (*The German Ideology*, p. 81)

Thus, the need for political-state mediation would be canceled there where the social roots of the tearing that caused it would have been abolished, alongside with its own mediation in this process.

With these elements, it is outlined a conception of history by which the circumstance of misery of the proletariat would express the moment of "natural history" when the productive forces would become destructive forces for the producers of social wealth themselves. The crises of capital reproduction would emblematically express this circumstance. From this would follow the need to undertake a revolutionary struggle against the ruling class and its idealized and practical expression in the social form of

the State. The success of this undertaking would consummate the abolition of the social relations that governed the organization of labour on the basis of class structure and where the proletariat would progressively dissolve itself as a class. To a large extent, this revolutionary process is more than a mere antagonism with the ruling powers. We are dealing with the self-transformation of the proletariat through its own revolutionary experience. By virtue of this self-transformation, it will be able, as a class, of "ridding itself of all the muck of ages" to "become fitted to found society anew" (*The German Ideology*, 53). Through its self-transforming activity, the proletariat would consummate the generalization of a massive revolutionary consciousness and practice that would intensify the abandonment of the merely natural that, in the beginning, would still regulate its own activity.

All of this would be consummated with the definitive abolition of the political dimension and its state forms, which throughout "natural history" would have been the crystallization of the ruling social powers and which would no longer be required. The human horizon of the revolution, then, is presented as the authentic emancipation, the one where the particular interest can finally be reunited with the perspective of the common in the form of a *real individuality*. On the contrary, a revolution that remained within the framework of politics would be doomed to reproduce a new variety of domination and tearing among human beings. In the *Critical Marginal Notes* referred to above, and concerning the limitations of a revolution that responds only to a *political animus* and does not have a *social* sense on the "level of totality" and with a sense of *community*, Marx puts it as follows:

> Its point of view is that of the [S]tate, of an *abstract* whole, which exists *only* through separation from real life, and which is *inconceivable* without the organised contradiction between the universal idea of man and the individual existence of man. Hence, too, a revolution with a *political* [*animus*], in accordance with the *limited* and *dichotomous* nature of this [animus], organises a ruling stratum in society at the expense of society itself. (*Critical Marginal Notes*, p. 205)

The human horizon of the revolution confronts this political animus and horizon and denounces it for being limited. Hence the vindication of a "socialized humanity" in the tenth of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, where the political dimension simply does not take place when "the point of view" of

modern materialism is formulated (cf. the second of the *Theses on Feuerbach*). The limitation of the political horizon would entail, according to Marx, the necessity of its absolute negation, or else the negation of its historical necessity; the passage to regard it as a contingency that can finally be abandoned. The *total negation* of personality would be resolved in a new conditionality that would constitute its antipode. Total negation occurred in the course of "natural history." Its negation, or the double negation that communism would establish, would be the "total affirmation" by which the horizon of a properly human life would be affirmed; that is, the negation of the conditions of life under capitalism, decisively including its political dimension.

In what follows, we will discuss the prospects of the political once class domination has been sublated, according to Marxian reasoning. We are about to discuss certain *presumptions* of our author's approach to the abolition of politics in communist society. Our purpose is to argue, instead, in favor of politics in a hypothetical humanly emancipated society, that is, for a communist society like the one outlined by Marx and whose determinations we presented in the previous chapter.

We turn, then, to identify and problematize what we consider to be the *presuppositions* from which Marx argues that the political dimension of human activity must be necessarily abolished. In our judgment, these would be three fundamental presuppositions, all of them—we must emphasize—perfectly matching the liberal tradition and its political conceptions. The first is the presumption, of Hobbesian-Lockean roots, that politics lacks a substance of its own, being rather an *artificial resource* by which individuals viabilize their interests. To that extent, it is a contingent reality from the viewpoint of the particularity of those individuals. The second presumption would be that human sociality would harbor the secret of *spontaneous harmony*. It would be a failed harmony that could not be realized due to the structures of domination (mediations) asserted throughout "natural history," but that could finally prosper, freely and without major obstacles, once the social classes and the State have been sublated. Finally, the presumption that the political forms can be treated from a *merely technical perspective* as an inessential reality compared to an authentic (and harmonious) mode of human activity. This latter element outlines Marx's ontological degradation of politics. Such forms of social activity that concern the common would come to be situated as realities external to *the properly human*. To a great extent, the matters that concern

the common would be estimated in reifying terms, in the way we proceed with the mechanical means of our activity.

According to Marx's philosophy of history and the role there assigned to the political, this dimension of social activity would be a *contingency that could be sublated* in the course of the historical progress that would take us from primitive communism to post-capitalist communism. Our inquiry will address the anthropological, logical, and ontological presuppositions that support the Marxian thesis for the abolition of the political dimension of social activity in relation to the conditions of reproduction of a communist society that would mark the end of "natural history." Such a society would deal with interindividual and collective differences, as well as with the complexity and conflicts that may result from them in the midst of the always finite conditions of the metabolism with Nature. Under the constantly renewed horizon of human emancipation, Marx claims that this will be possible without the political mediation of praxis. Let us examine the presuppositions of this claim.

3.1 Desubstantialization or Artificiality of Political Power

Marx's disposition toward revolutionary activity is expressed in many places of his work—to the point that we can easily identify the communist revolution as its *purpose*—where we find analyses, reflections, or vindications of a political character. In some cases, it constitutes the central subject of his writings; in others, political considerations "step in" as he is treating other issues. Among the former, those that dealt with the revolutionary political trends that Marx faced stand out; works written to understand the political activity of the revolutionary movements of his time and provide some guidelines to orient it. This is the case of *The Class Struggles in France* (Marx, 1978), published in 1850, of the articles published by Marx in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* between June 1, 1848 and May 19, 1849 (cf. *Collected Works*, Vols. 7–9, in Marx, 1977), and of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (Marx, 1979) of 1852. These are documents about the revolutionary processes that struck the European continent at the end of the Second French Republic. There is also *The Civil War in France* (Marx, 1986b) of 1871, apropos of the Paris Commune between 1870 and 1871. These publications present a conceptual deployment within very detailed situational analyses that aim to capture the meaning of the decisive revolutionary events Marx witnessed. They include works

published as singular volumes, others in fascicular editions of current affairs magazines, documents written for the associations in which Marx participated and a huge amount of journalistic articles. These are relatively concise, yet remarkable pieces, containing outlines of what could be a Maxian political science. They are, then, texts that can be profited from for formulating a Marxian theory about the meaning and necessity of political processes in capitalist societies.

At the same time, these writings provide us with a rather ambivalent situation, especially in relation to the heirs of the most orthodox Marxism. These documents, in fact, have much more than just the specific revolutionary motto and the conceptual rigidity imposed by them upon intellectual pursuits, when their urgency seeks reinforcement in immediate theoretical justifications presented in the press and in party documents. On the one hand, they provide resounding "confirmations" of the classic Marxist theses about the centrality of social classes and property over the means of production, about the determination of the political by the economic materiality, etc. On the other hand, they are the scenario of a broader reflective journey where the classic categorical schemes of Marxism find mediations and openings for considering determinations that at least are not immediately identical with the standards of so-called Marx's *historical materialism*. For this reason, Habermas has argued that there is a distance between what Marx "says he does" and what he "really does" when developing the project of a materialistic science of society, where what he effectively does would be much more than what is recognized under the deterministic and reductionist schemes of classic Marxism that he himself promoted (cf. Habermas, 1972, p. 52 passim).

The extent to which this distance appears has motivated extensive studies by various authors and on different fronts. Thus, for example, the role of subjectivity and its resources (ideals, memory, emotions) in defining the concrete course of the political processes studied, or the relation between action and circumstances that is delineated in these writings. Again, we can refer to Habermas' consideration of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* as "radical historical thinking" (1982, p. 13). In the case of our investigation, we will rather focus on the exposition that these writings present of the classil Marxist theses on politics; in particular, with relation to what we call the *desubstantialization of political power* in Marx's work and the *reduction of politics to an administrative technique*.

The political writings mentioned above are especially relevant for the treatment of the presuppositions of the Marxian thesis of the abolition of

politics under communism. The constant effort to formulate the strict derivation of political conflicts in accordance with the course of class struggles is deployed in them. For politics to be assumed as a dimension of praxis devoid of substance supposes the possibility of explaining its becoming from something beyond itself, something without which its very being would vanish: social classes. In this way, a reductionist side of Marx's thought is expressed, which is developed in different directions, for example, around the notion of *ideology*. This reductionist side interests us in the relation between the *economic base* and the political *superstructure* of society, classically expounded by Marx in the Preface to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (cf. pp. 262–263, in Marx, 1987).

Of course, this distinction has been the pretext for the most excessive and sterile simplifications in various tendencies of Marxism. At the same time, it cannot be considered just a matter of *misinterpretations*. In different ways, although with considerable nuances, Marx's own work—including these "political writings"—encourages the view that the political superstructure is an artificiality that results from social class domination. Therefore, such a superstructure would not respond to our own mode of being: an *authentically human* mode that corresponds to the free development of personality. That is, the contingent nature of politics and its institutional forms is systematically affirmed, once class domination has collapsed according to the course of the end of "natural history" and the crises of capitalist reproduction. Being an artifice whose lack of substance could be made manifeste in theory and practice, it would be established the condition by which its historical abandonment would be feasible and necessary.[3]

We immediately insist that the nuances are considerable and that the potentially reductionist formulations are interspersed with others that offer a perspective on the processes analyzed that is more complex and richer in mediations. For instance, we find notable pieces of style and reflection, in a non-reductionist vein, on the tense relationship between the Prussian Agreement Assembly and the German National Assembly in Frankfurt in the convulsed 1848, considering the interaction between

[3] To examine the roots of the praise of the artificial in the philosophical modernity which we can explore from Hobbes, cf. Bovero (1988).

social classes and political struggles.[4] In *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (cf. pp. 118–119, 192–193, passim), the most notable examples of this non-reductionist disposition appear apropos of the role of military hierarchies in the Second French Republic, the weight of the bureaucracy as an "artificial caste" (cf. pp. 191–192), or when reference is made to the "mass of the bourgeoisie" (cf. pp. 119–120)—including in it the legitimist landowners who are still in the halfway stage of definitively losing their restored lordly benefits.[5]

In this direction, the Marxian analysis of the "protagonist" of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Louis Napoleon himself, stands out, whose rise appears as the fortuitous product of a process that enthrones a "nobody" in a leading role (cf. p. 150). In Marx's view, this was a properly structured process, but without any clear class character, particularly when it is supported by *a class that is not a class*: the lumpenproletariat (cf. Bussard, 1987). The characterization of the Napoleonic shape is marked by a peculiar situation. On the one hand, Louis Napoleon does not have an unequivocal class affiliation. On the other hand, he directs his efforts toward the consolidation of a social order of domination which, at the same time, he confronts "almost without realizing it," as when he relies on peasants to sustain his personal project, provoking the discomfort of the financial aristocracy or the landowners.

The contradictions that characterized Bonapartism have been widely discussed as well as its alleged independence from the dynamism of social classes (cf. Miliband, 1965, Section III). In fact, Marx tries to relativize this class indetermination of Louis Bonaparte affirming that he is the representative of peasant farmers, with all the *ambivalence* that the class condition of this social sector has because of its local limitations and lack of political organization (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 186 ff.). Moreover, he adds that he actually represents the conservative peasant (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 188); a conservatism that has been permanently spurred on by the terms of bourgeois domination over peasants and by the latter's understanding of the interests of the city and its centralist propensity, as subsequent forms of oppression of their interests (*The Eighteenth*

[4] Cf. the article "The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution" in *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 154–178.

[5] A global balance of Marx and Engels' analysis of the scenario of 1848 can be found in Claudin (2018). Likewise, an identification and categorization of the social and political players of the Second French Republic can be found in Sotomayor (2018, p. 138 ff.).

Brumaire, pp. 188–189). Even so, Louis Bonaparte's indetermination does not cease to reappear as a result of the peculiar social tensions and contradictions that elevated him:

> This contradictory task of the man explains the contradictions of his government, the confused, blind to-ing and fro-ing which seeks now to win, now to humiliate first one class and then another and *arrays all of them uniformly against him*, whose practical uncertainty forms a highly comical contrast to the imperious, categorical style of the government decrees, a style which is faithfully copied from the uncle. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 194–195, my emphasis)

However, these nuances in the terms of the relation between the economic base and the political superstructure are replaced, in many other places, by strong statements about the essential primacy of the former over the latter. For example, in the context of the trial against the Rhenish District Committee of Democrats of which he was a member, Marx expresses this relation as a hierarchy of unilateral articulation ("from the bottom up"), with relation to the place of right and the law in modern society:

> But society is not founded upon the law; that is a legal fiction. On the contrary, the law must be founded upon society, it must express the common interests and needs of society—as distinct from the caprice of the individuals—which arise from the material mode of production prevailing at the given time. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 327)

Therefore, the Crown's pretension of the "*maintenance of the legal basis*" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 328) would be but the forced variation that wants to assert outdated social interests in the form of universal legal regulation, when this should be limited to the new mode of acquisition and circulation (cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 328). Such a stance is also expressed regarding the origin of *taxes* in the Middle Ages as a way of the bourgeoisie to buy liberties from kings (cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 336–337) and regarding the continuity of this relation in modern societies:

> In modern [S]tates this right to grant and refuse taxes has been turned by bourgeois society into a means of controlling the Government, the

> committee administering its general interests. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 337)

Including its variation, the annual budgets:

> The rejection of a budget is therefore the parliamentary form of a refusal to pay taxes. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 337)

In counterpoint to the class determination of the principles and representations of the political actors on the French revolutionary scene of 1848, Marx develops elaborate analyses that reveal the conjunction of the monarchical interests of the "Party of Order" (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 127–129) and their fragmentation. Either because of their different material bases (cf. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 165–168), or in relation to the social-democratic perspective of the petty bourgeoisie (cf. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 129–131) and its idealizations (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 133–134). In all cases, the deterministic propensity is here nuanced. To better appreciate this, it is particularly interesting to revisit the Marxian treatment of the National Assembly's surrender to Louis Bonaparte's ambitions through the stigmatization of the parliament as "socialist." Although it is decisively established that the bourgeois *social interest* must prevail over the bourgeois *political interest*, here we find a reasoning foreign to mechanical sequences where class interest and political interest are linked in the form of an ad hoc parliamentary political representation for a particular social force. Even political representation itself can be set aside in favor of the social interest that gave it meaning:

> Thus, by now stigmatising as "*socialistic*" what it had previously extolled as "*liberal*," the bourgeoisie confesses that its own interests dictate that it should be delivered from the danger of its own rule; that, in order to restore tranquillity in the country, its bourgeois parliament must, first of all, be laid to rest. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 142–143)

When Louis Bonaparte became Emperor, the process by which the social powers of the bourgeoisie abandoned their corresponding political forces in the National Assembly was completed:

> The finance aristocracy, therefore, condemned the parliamentary struggle of the Party of Order with the executive power as a *disturbance of*

> *order*, and celebrated every victory of the President over its ostensible representatives as a *victory of order*. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 170)

The counterpoint to this abandonment of their political representatives by the bourgeois social forces was called by Marx "parliamentary cretinism" (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 161): the stubborn disposition of the political representatives of social domination to insist on their role as parliamentary mediators when the social forces that gave them that role already abandoned them (cf. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 161). The force of the determination of the economic interest abandons for inessential the political mediation previously embraced. Marx does not hide his contempt for the ease with which the dominant social interests dispensed with their political representatives once they were no longer functional (cf. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 171). The rupture of the bourgeoisie with its political representatives is extended to the rupture with its own press and is finally condemned by Marx as a rupture equally in favor of the interests of its social domination (cf. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, pp. 172–173).

Non-deterministic mediations, then, emerge in which the political representatives have ceased to answer to mere class determination and have come to engender their *own interest*. An interest, in this case, contrary to the social interests that originally sustained them and granted them a place in the political arena. That is precisely why they dropped them out when *their* representation profiled independent arrangements. These are nuances that move Marx away from iron determinism when thinking the tearing of the public vis-à-vis the private interests in bourgeois society. Even from a liberal reception, the presence of these non-deterministic nuances has long been problematized as an expression of a contradiction between two dispositions present in Marx's work. On the one hand, one would find the essential core of a Marxian philosophy of history with a deterministic base, anchored in the economy and constituted from the Hegelian animus promoting an omni-explicative theory of social reality. On the other hand, the political analyses we have presented would offer profiles where politics seems to acquire a certain autonomy (cf. Máiz, 1992).

In any case, the nuances we refer to do not change Marx's fundamental position on the substance of the political, or better said, its lack of substance. All the above-mentioned mediations and their multiple adversities would collapse on their own foundations with the sublation of the socio-economic class structure from which political domination was

forged. This is the horizon of reflection of writings such as *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. According to the *Communist Manifesto*, "every class struggle is a political struggle" (p. 493, in Marx & Engels, 1976a). While social classes exist, politics will have a necessary place in the *prehistory* of our social life. In terms of Lockean iusnaturalism, this is formulated as follows:

> The great and *chief end* therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, *is the Preservation of* their Property. (Locke, 1690, § 124).

Also for Marx, political power serves the defense of private property, although clearly this is not positively appreciated as it is in Locke. In Marx, rather, the need for political power is established from the historically situated interests of the property-owning classes. More precisely, a power that means domination and negation of the interests of the particular subjects excluded from the private property of the means of production: "the organised power of one class for oppressing another" (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 506).

3.1.1 Against the "Free State"

The artificiality of political power is not discussed by Marx only in relation to the criticism of bourgeois parliamentarism and the paradoxes of its order of domination. It is also positively formuled apropos of the place that would correspond to the State from a revolutionary perspective. To appreciate this, let us return to the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx, 1989). This is a fundamental document for delving into this conception of political life and its struggles, particularly in relation to the institutional forms of the State. Here, Marx conceives the State as the political form of social domination: the organization of power that corresponds to a certain socio-economic formation that allows it to reproduce its structures. In this sense, it is devoid of autonomy and of a substance of its own. Its being is dependent on and functional to the order of such structures; in particular, the class structures by which the terms of production and distribution of socially produced wealth are decided.

From this perspective, the vindications of the Third Section of the *Gotha Programme*—Lassallean-style demands made within the framework of the completion of the German unification process—for "the establishment of producers' cooperative societies with *state aid under*

the democratic control of the working people" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 93) cannot but trigger the most open rejection by Marx. Furthermore, he condemns this proposal as a reactionary one advocating the dependence of the workers on the State (in this case, Bismarck's regime). In sum, the consummation of such a proposal would subordinate revolutionary activity to the dispositions of an entity whose purpose is none other than the reproduction of the social order of domination over the workers: whether they are subjected to the owners of the capital or the owners of the land (*junkers*) (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 94).

In this sense, the demand that Marx finds particularly irritating in the *Gotha Programme* is that of the foundation of the "free [S]tate" from the Second Section: "Starting from these basic principles, the German workers' party strives by all legal means for the *free* [*S*]*tate*—and—socialist society" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 91). The discussion of this issue is deferred to the first point of the Fourth Section of the *Programme*, which deals with the "The free basis of the State" and where the question of "what is the free State" is asked from the very beginning (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 94). In this regard, Marx reiterates the nonsense of the quest for something *already consecrated* in the order of capitalist society. Remember that—as we saw in the previous chapter—Marx had already made a similar criticism of the demand for this *Programme* for a "fair distribution of the proceeds of labour" among "all members of society" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 83–84). Indeed, Marx maintained in this regard that capitalist production operates according to the characteristic homogenizations of the law of value and that, therefore, the much-mentioned "equity" is already part of its horizon of domination (cf. del Aguila, 2020, pp. 20–27).

For the case that now summons us, it turns out that the State, being subject to the interests of capital, is *already free from* the interests of the producers. Hence, from a socialist perspective—such as the one that the *Programme* should aim at in Marx's judgment—it would be a matter of subordinating the State to the society of producers:

> Freedom consists in converting the [S]tate from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and even today forms of [S]tate are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the "freedom of the [S]tate". (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 94)

Accordingly, the struggle for the "free State" would be by definition a struggle against the interests of the producers: "It is by no means the purpose of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the [S]tate 'free'" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 94). For the rest, this would be a misguided vindication based on the flawed assumption that the State is an "independent entity." In fact, the existing society would be "the *basis* of the existing [*S*]*tate*" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 94), the former providing the possibilities and limits of political action of the latter, according to the pattern of its dominant interests.

Moreover, Marx argues that political demands such as universal suffrage, direct legislation or popular right—proposed by the *Programme* and associated with the demand for a "free State"—were already exercised in countries like Switzerland or the United States of America: "This sort of '[S]tate of the future' is a *present-day* [*S*]*tate*, although existing outside the 'framework' of the German Empire [sic]" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 95). Likewise, the demand of the German Workers' Party for income tax would also belong to the category of liberal vindications that presuppose the class structure of society without questioning it: "Income tax presupposes various sources of income of the various social classes, and hence capitalist society" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 96). The universal scope of these attributes of the "free State" would not be conducive to human emancipation and, besides, it was already an achievement of liberal societies in Marx's time (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 96). It would not be a matter of aiming for a "free State," but of *abandoning of the State* as the consummation of the political domination of capital, according to our author's early dictum on human interests: "*All* emancipation is a *reduction* of the human world and relationships to *man himself*" (*On the Jewish Question*, p. 168).

From this perspective, politics is the result of the artificiality of certain extrinsic interests (insofar as they are independent of it) which constitute it, providing it with the reality that it is incapable of giving to itself. This non-original plane of human activity would have been established because of the requirements of a mode of life that is detached from itself, i.e., estranged. The possibility of sublating the artifice of political life would suppose its radical abandonment in order to institute a life in common where there is no room except for that reabsorption where human beings can finally enjoy themselves in the social world they were capable to produce.

> Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognised and organized his "*forces propres*" [own forces] as *social* forces, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished. (*On the Jewish Question*, p. 168)

This vindication of the universality of human beings proposes that such should be the effective practice of individuals, which could not happen in the domain of political emancipation. The abstraction of citizenship carries with it the externalization and dislocation of the individual between his particular-being and his species-being (*Gattungswesen*), in Marx's early Feuerbachian vocabulary: a schizoid variety, socially established and reproduced. By virtue of this, the common ends up appearing as a foreignness that is enforced at the expense of individuality as a particularity that responds to specific interests. Such are the prospects of non-dominant social interests. But even in a *mediated* and systemic way, individuals from the ruling social classes would also experience "the loss of self" on the horizon of the structures of class domination here mentioned (cf. *Paris Manuscripts*, pp. 281–282, in Marx, 1975d). Consequently, in order to experience social forces as our own forces, we should leave the political mediation aside and resume a collective course of action expressed in the reconciliation of man with himself.

This rejection of political mediations appears very early in Marx's work, even before the articles in the *German–French Annals*. Its starting point is the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. It shows not only a modern *anthropology*—where the nature of man is certainly not that of a "political animal" (*Politics*, 1253a, in Aristotle, 2009)—but also a certain *logic* from which the "authentically human" is conceived. Faced with the practical unfoldments that have produced vast forms of human self-negation and self-submission, such an authenticity is conceived as the real capacity to arrange our activity, our relationships, and our products in the form of *immediacy* and its consequent simplicity. By the way, Feuerbach's presence resonates in this Marxian arrangement toward immediacy and his mark on it largely transcended the criticism of religion. In gnoseological terms, the issue appears as follows in the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*:

> True and divine is only that which requires no proof, *that which is certain immediately through itself*, that which speaks immediately for itself and carries the affirmation of its being within itself; in short, that which is purely and simply unquestionable, indubitable, and as clear as the sun. (Feuerbach, 2012, p. 228 my emphasis)

In ontological terms, on the other hand, we find this criticism directed against Hegel: "All is mediated, says the Hegelian philosophy. But something is true only when it is no longer mediated; that is, when it is immediate" (2012, p. 228). In this direction, the way Marx understood the sublation of human estrangement was committed, from his earliest works, to the practical consequence of abandoning political life. Back to Feuerbach: "A truth that *mediates itself* is a truth that still has its opposite clinging to it. The opposite is taken as the starting point, but is later on discarded" (2012, p. 229). Moreover, Feuerbach adds, continuity itself is meaningless, the dialectic is abandoned, and the restoration of the properly human can thus be considered in terms of a *new beginning*: "Now, if it is all along something to be discarded or negated, why should I then proceed from it rather than from its negation?" (2012, p. 229) Now then, the critique of politics in Marx responds to this same impulse to *remove the mediation*. And far from restricting its influence on the "young Marx" of the neo-Hegelian polemic against religious estrangement, the eagerness to eliminate mediations drives the criticism of political power throughout Marx's work.

In our judgment, the Marxian rejection of the political organization of the life in common is committed to the unstated presupposition of a certain fundamental harmony lost in the earliest stages of estrangement, i.e., the early forms of the "natural division" of labour (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1). From here, the sequence of a blind historical necessity would have emerged. Political estrangement in modern societies would perhaps be its most accomplished culmination, at least from the viewpoint of the material implementation of human potentials at the service of social domination. This does not deny Marx's "progressive conception of history," but it does establish its peculiarity: the radical loss of human potentials in the process of "natural history" can be stopped once and for all—given a certain degree in the development of the productive forces and a certain moment of their contradiction with the relations of production contemporary to them—by canceling the mediations. Thus, it would be feasible for the producers of social wealth to

restore the originally lost immediacy. This would not consist in some form of "going back" and betting for some backward facticity. The bet would be, rather, for affirming relations emancipated from political mediation conducive to the freedom of the associated producers as social relations redefined through the communist revolution against capitalist society. In terms of Marx's early criticism of Hegel influenced by Feuerbach, the issue is especially palpable in its attack on the Hegelian conception of the State from *the viewpoint of civil society*. We will now address this issue.

3.2 Spontaneity of the Social and Presumption of Harmony

As we have indicated, our approach assumes that the whole of Marx's work is a critical project committed to sublate the narrow horizons of modern citizenship. His perspective is the horizon of life in common that in his early writings—at least between 1843 and 1845—was expressed as "human emancipation." From this hermeneutic position, our reading guide is based on a work prior to the *German-French Annals* where Marx explicitly presented the distinction between "political emancipation" and "human emancipation." Here Marx's most extensive critique of the Hegelian philosophy of right is developed. This critique affirms the fundamental theoretical need to embrace the perspective of the particular interests of civil society, in order to render the course of social history legible. This perspective will not be abandoned in our author's later work.

This work is the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* or the *Kreuznach Manuscript* of 1843, which was not published during Marx's lifetime. It is part of a truncated project to develop a vast critique of the Hegelian philosophy of right. A project that would encompass Hegel's conception of sovereignty and the relationship between the State and civil society of this philosophy, up to the logical foundations of the dialectic through which Hegel presents the categorical deployment of the Objective Spirit (cf. Jackson, 1990). The preserved text exclusively contains the otherwise detailed analysis of the fragments §§ 261–313 of the *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, 2008). It is the part corresponding to the Constitutional Law or Internal Constitution for itself, which in Hegel's work goes up to the External Sovereignty, both forming Internal Political Law. This path is part of the Hegelian treatment of the State as the culmination of Ethicality (*Sittlichkeit*).

The confrontation launched by Marx is firm and intense. Marx relies on the Hegelian system to address the fundamental problems that Hegel's understanding of the constitutional order poses to the critical demands of political emancipation. At the same time, the reading allows for many nuances in Marx's assessment of Hegel, as well as for various conceptual precisions that normally will no longer take place during the later stages of this debate. In fact, this writing of an only twenty-five years old Marx will end up being the most extensive and exhaustive known product of this confrontation. Marx's vein is neo-Hegelian (cf. Bianchi, 2006, pp. 44–52) and particularly captivated by Feuerbach's discovery of the urgency of "return to oneself" to reconcile mankind with itself. Rossi points out the Feuerbachian influence on these Manuscripts in Marx's incorporation of: (a) Trandelenburg's Aristotelian critique of Hegelian logic (recovery of the *hypokeimmenon* to face the void resulting from Feuerbach's attack on Hegel's "logical mysticism"), and (b) Ruge's philosophical-practical critique (decisive step toward the "transformation of what there is," which in Feuerbach was not fully expressed) (cf. Rossi, 1971, pp. 153–174). From here, the general critical scheme of the Marxian works and their methodological standards are outlined toward recovering the reality "disrupted" by the experience of mediation (cf. Cerroni, 1961). The purpose, then, is for humanity to break free from the mediations of the historical experience of modern life. This includes its speculative ideas, like as the Hegelian philosophy of right, which have prevented him from recognizing and reproducing himself as a free subject.

In order to address the presuppositions of the Marxian valuation and conception of political power from this early writing, we will consider: (a) the critique of the alienation of political power via the critique of Hegel's philosophy of right (i.e., the dialectic between State and civil society, its collisions and ambiguities); (b) the logical support of the Hegelian interpretation of the modern State, where the Marxian vocation to "invert" the Hegelian system appears, under an approach that claims its "beheading" and that denigrates the "mediations" of the Hegelian dialectic as an evasion of the real conflicts; finally, (c) the Marxian conception of democracy that appears in this *Manuscript*, and its promotion as a "real relation" between the State and civil society.

3.2.1 *State and Civil Society: Immanence and Exteriority*

The object of the writing analyzed and discussed by Marx is the State as the cusp of Hegelian Ethicality. Marx dwells on the place that corresponds to civil society at this point. His intention is to reveal the dissociation between the affairs of the State and the personality of the individuals who administer those affairs, which is expressed in the consummation by which the relationship between both would occur "formally and accidentally" (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 20–22). Such a personality is the social being of those who exist and act in the State, but the unitary perspective of *sovereignty* requires of them their mere identity; that is to say, the transcendence beyond the particular. The State had been presented by Hegel (2008, § 261) as the "immanent *end*" of civil society, where particular interests would have been fully expressed. Marx, however, traces the determination, which is a counterpart of the previous one, with which Hegel (2008, § 261) determines the position of the State with respect to civil society: its character of "external *necessity*." From this we understand the transcendence of the State, whose form and content would contravene the particular interests. Likewise, in their pretended unity with these interests, such form and content would obliterate—according to Marx—the distinction of their contribution to the common and with that their own reality.

The tearing between State and civil society, and the resolution of this relation in favor of the former, would be expressed in Hegel's bet for the constitutional monarchy and the place assigned to the Power of the Prince. Marx finds in Hegel's attempts to substantiate the Crown—the necessity of the *dynastic principle* and *succession*—a decidedly inconsequent aspect of his dialectic; they appear as a gratuitous identity between sovereignty and the birth and body of the monarch. Paradoxically, it would be the *physis* and not reason that would dominate at the summit of the Objective Spirit and the State. The universal—which was laboriously working its way through the particular interests in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*—is now assigned as *property* held by a *particular subject*: the monarch, with all the privileges and the irresponsibility this brings with it (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 35–38), with the surrender to the vagaries inherent to every empirical particularity.

As for the Executive, Hegel focuses his analysis on bureaucracy. Let us remember that the Hegelian conception that takes us from civil society to the State establishes a continuity between the corporations or classes

of civil society (agricultural, industrial, and universal) and the different powers or estates of the State (the Upper House and the Chamber of Deputies in the Legislative, and the bureaucracy in the Executive, respectively) (cf. Hegel, 2008, § 297 and, especially, § 303). The relation between corporation and political estate would express—for Marx—the reciprocal unsuitability between the State and civil society: both are contraposed and need each other as mediations of this irresolution (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 45 ff.). Bureaucracy comes from what Hegel calls the *universal estate*: i.e., the educated and enlightened middle class. Hence, as bureaucracy asserts itself in the exercise of power, it elaborates its own *medium* for self-generated ends that would rise above particular interests: "For the bureaucrat the world is a mere object to be manipulated by him" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 48). At the same time, it cannot simply leave behind that particularity against which it defines its activity and legitimizes its purpose. So again, state matters would be presented as a particularity; in this case, through the life of the bureaucrat, illusorily general. Now consider the mechanisms designed to ensure continuity between the corporation and the State with regard to the Executive and its bureaucracy; namely, criteria for choosing officials, assigned salaries and control of their performance. Marx reveals the nature of these mechanisms as resources of a political organization whose vocation for sovereign unity is always striving—following the pattern of the Crown—to impose itself upon the corporations and their particular wills from *another* particularity, even if it is a mystified one.

In this *Kreuznach Manuscript*, Marx devotes his greatest attention to the Hegelian conception of the Legislative. The treatment of the Courts, the Upper House, and the Chamber of Deputies is extensive. Marx exposes as inconsequent Hegel's open disdain of the Courts, even though they constitute the consciousness in which the "essence of public affairs" is presented. In effect, the real subjects whose interests should be satisfied in the State belong to civil society (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 60 ff.). All of this is due precisely—and according to Hegel himself—to the connection between the Courts and civil society. However, in the end, public affairs would be defined for Hegel from the sovereignty of the Crown and the Executive. The content of the public matter would therefore be established independently of the form that corresponds to the political representation of civil society; i.e., the Courts, where the interests of the corporations or classes of civil society would dominate.

That is, according to Marx, the Courts and the Legislative would constitute an "inessential" domain in the Hegelian philosophy of the State (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 64–69).

Within this framework, the Courts would become the legal sanction of an illusion: that they represent the interest of the people (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 64–65). It is therefore a matter of recognizing the implications of private estates acquiring political significance. The dissociation between the private (social) and the public (political), distinctive of the Modern Age, would be masqueraded by Hegel as an essential feature of political life. Moreover, this would be done establishing the superiority of the State and bringing with it the serious impasse of consequently expressing in the State that civil society is an essential factor of the whole of Ethicality. The role of civil society was thus established before entering into the very content of the State. However, what ended up happening is that it was consummated as a mere "image" of a Legislative dissociated from the content of public affairs (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 70–74).

The justification of the need for a patrimonial-based Upper House in the farming class has also motivated Marx's greatest objections and the indication of the greatest Hegelian inconsistencies. The Legislative is an incessant source of conflict, insofar as it is defined as the civil society of the political State, the life of the particular that comes from the corporations and the classes in the midst of the common: "the *posited* revolt" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 91). Faced with this particularity that is ingrained in the State, Hegel posits the need for a counterweight that expresses the counterpart to the monarchical singularity; a mediation that allows it to substantiate the unity of the State via the Upper House:

> As the monarch is democratised in the executive, so this "estates" element must be *monarchised* in its delegation. Hence what Hegel wants is a *monarchical element from the* [*Courts*]. (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 92)

With this, Hegel hopes to consummate the "*possibility of harmonization*" (2008, § 304). Such an agreement, however, would no longer rely upon a common essence, but upon two contraposed essential dispositions: the multiplicity of the interests of civil society and the singularity of the monarchy, which would be reconciled in the existence or material condition of the nobility and their property of land. Nature, then, reappears once more to consummate the unity that the Spirit does not fully achieve

(cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 105–106). In this way, Marx goes from indignation to derision:

> It is therefore natural that the nobility should be proud of their blood, their descent, in short the *life-history of their bodies*; it is, of course, this *zoological* way of looking at things which has its corresponding science in *heraldry*. The secret of the nobility is *zoology*. (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 106)

To the Hegelian difficulties in conceiving the political estates from the differentiations of civil society, we now add the problematic reintroduction of its unity via the material determination of the Upper House. Marx's criticism is thus directed against the patriarchalism of this peculiar political mediation, expressed in the family life of the farming class. This would be a sort of natural ascription of certain representative prerogatives (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 94–95); that is, a form of privatization of the State that *negates itself* in this way. The shape of primogeniture and aristocratic privilege that Hegel derives from its independence associated with the richness of the soil is here the focus of Marx's discussion. In Hegel's Abstract Right, contract had been placed above property. The latter would be a merely reifying relation; the former, the place where freedom would appear in the framework of a human relationship, that is, a more "spiritual" relationship in Hegelian terms. Now it turns out that Hegel disclaims this hierarchy in the State, he disclaims this privilege of freedom as a relationship between persons and turns to extoll the independence of the "person-thing" relationship. In the field of Public Law, the spiritual independence of the citizen and the State gives way to that of the private person in the shape of the aristocrat owner of land on the basis of certain natural characteristics (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 94 ff.).

Thus, while the Upper House is "the political *constitution* of civil society" (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 112) in a estate society, the Chamber of Deputies is so in modern society. The contradiction between these two opposing essences leads Marx to critically insist on (a) the medieval regression into which Hegel would fall time and again in this section of his philosophy of right, and (b) the State-dependent conception of the public subject to the private that Hegel would arrive at. Marx seems to demand more Hegelianism from Hegel than he offers: "In constitutional [S]tates the guarantee for the existence of the [Courts] is the

law" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 115), which should not depend on the immediate material determinations of this or that class or corporation.

The law would assert the priority of the general interest, which entails various difficulties to shed light on the actual role of the representative in the Legislative. For Marx, at this point, the Hegelian subsumption of the particular into the general leads to support the inessentiality of this representation, or the necessity that it is not properly that representation, at the risk of questioning the unity of sovereignty (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 122–123). The purpose that Marx discerns behind this "sleight of hand" by which the interests of civil society would end up proving inessential is that of submitting the Legislative to the Executive and, ultimately, to the Crown. Thus, the Hegelian irresolution regarding the fundamental conflict between State and civil society would eventually translate into the choice of a constitutional monarchy. In it, the interests of civil society would be submitted to the singular will of the Crown and to the mediations that it finds in the Executive Branch, as well as in the representation of the farming class via the Upper House.

It is now time to outline the fundamental reasons why—according to Marx—the Hegelian project of the immanent articulation between the disparate dispositions of civil society and the unity of sovereignty would result in this peculiar construction that abdicates the spiritual and resolutely turns "into the crassest *materialism*" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 105). There where the Hegelian dialectic surrenders to the mere determination coming from Nature: the body of the monarch, as well as the land property of the farming class and its hereditary shapes (dynasty and primogeniture).

> At the summits of the political [S]tate it is everywhere birth which makes certain individuals the incarnations of the supreme offices of state. … In its supreme functions the [S]tate acquires the reality of an *animal*. Nature avenges itself on Hegel for the contempt he has shown it. (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 105)

Marx strikes against the arbitrariness of the mediations proposed by the Hegelian philosophy of right, against its metaphysically legitimized unilaterality and irrationality. Hence the bet for a certain "beheading" and "inversion" of its state consummation. All this in accordance with the need to return to the immediacy of "man" and his social bonds.

3.2.2 *Rejection of "Logical Pantheism" and Dialectical Mediations*

The Marxian critique of the Hegelian philosophy of right and its consummation in the defense of constitutional monarchy responds to a broader confrontation against Hegel's logic and ontology; that is, against the Hegelian dialectic as a whole (cf. Wood, 1993). In the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* we are reviewing, the explicit point of this discussion is the criticism of "logical pantheism." Here, the Idea is hypostatized as a subject and proceeds to establish predicates in the world that are in accordance with its conscious will. Such predicates would be true "real subjects" whose position, altered by the preponderance of the Idea, places them as predicates of their effective predicates; that is, the *real subject* appears *mystified* in the form of a transcendence that arranges the existing material and provides it with a form foreign to its own immanent movement. This movement would consequently be presented as unessential. The matter would be treated very ironically a couple of years later in the famous passage on "The Mystery of Speculative Construction" of *The Holy Family* (cf. pp. 57–61). For the case at hand, the diverse interests of civil society are appreciated and placed in accordance with the transcendent demand of the Crown. From it, it is established the singular unity to which all the effective movement of real subjects must be subsumed, turning them into imaginary predicates of a mystified subject (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 23 ff.).

In the framework of Hegel's philosophy as a whole, the background is that the Idea takes the State and its effective forms as mere predicates of itself; i.e., of a logical-metaphysical subject that—in the Marxian perspective—inverts the real nature of the effectively acting subjects and powers. This is an entirely Feuerbachian criticism: it insists on (a) the need to return to the immediately given condition of the human being, as well as on (b) the abandonment of speculative mediations by which the human being becomes lost and unaware of itself in its self-mystification (cf. Avineri, 1968, p. 281 ff.; Breckman, 1999, pp. 10–12; Sotomayor, 2018, p. 63 passim). Over and over again, especially in the analysis of the introductory paragraphs of the Constitutional Law (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 5–18), Marx underlines the pantheistic-based tautologies in which Hegel incurs. In the face of the categorical movement of Logic, they sustain the irrelevance of the specific determinations of the State. The Marxian critique of this dialectical challenges the Hegelian pretension to make the Idea and the State "organic" realities. To Marx's

understanding, its pretended organicity is soon abandoned to ensure that its ends are transcendent, so that they prevail over the realization of the particular subjects. This discredits the Hegelian formulations that simultaneously asserted that such ends should be immanent for themselves (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 11 passim). The statements of this critique lead to the early Marxian calls to "behead" and "invert" the Hegelian system. This point is crucial to our study of Marx's conception of political power.

The critique of "logical pantheism" in this *Kreuznach Manuscript* immediately connects the two issues. On the one hand, the need to abandon the transcendent perspective of the Idea—so that we can account for the interests and effective dispositions that define the content of political life—leads to the topic of the "beheading." In this line, Marx extensively discusses the Hegelian resource by which the self-determination of the State, as a personality, would end up becoming real in the person and corporeality of the monarch, from which Hegel's monarchism would acquire a mystical legitimization. Likewise, he marks his interlocutor as inconsequent for not approaching the ideality of the State from the very organization of civil society. He does not assert the reality of its determination in the production of the whole of Ethicality. He follows, rather, the course of the transubstantiation of the Idea turned into subject and the course of the subjects of civil society turned into the negation of themselves once they reach the State in the form of some political estate (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 75–79). According to Marx:

> If Hegel wished to be consistent, he would on the contrary have to make every effort to construe the estates element in accordance with its *essential character* (§ 301) as the *being for themselves* of matters of general concern in the thoughts, etc., of the *many*, that is, to construe it quite independently of the other presuppositions of the political [S]tate. (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 127)

On the other hand, the shape of political instances as blurred "images" or "illusions" of the real movement of the subjects that constitute civil society leads Marx to begin his well-known statements about "inverting" Hegel. The expectation is to think the ideality of the real as nothing other than the conceptual formulation of the practical movement (cf. Rubel, 1970, p. 52 ff.). The discussion concerning the Hegelian approach to the Upper House illustrates the point. Marx insists on the mystification of the Idea as a subject, so that the Legislative manages to consummate the

mediating role that the Idea assigned to it. But he does not stop there. He adds that the solution to this mystical irresolution is to reverse subject and predicate, and thus to abandon the illusion.

According to Marx—and as we indicated before—Hegel demands that the mediation brought by the Legislative to the relations between the State and civil society, between the Crown and civil society, and between the Executive and civil society, be completed from the singular demands of the Crown. This would force the introduction of a political estate, the Upper House, with prerogatives that do not result from the immanent movement of the civil society, but that are assigned to it from the transcendence of the Idea. This shaping of Hegelian mediations—Marx argues—leads to the evasion of real conflicts; i.e., it dissimulates them, forcing their harmony from this *ideal* perspective (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 87–90). For its part, the Marxian resource of "inversion" would bring us back to the effective contrapositions between the empirical subjects of civil society and would show their real horizons of solution. In this case, the appeal to subsidiary mediations whose support—at least in the Hegelian dialectic—could be none other than that of mystical transcendence no longer takes place. In this way, the classic receptions have stressed in this respect, either the rejection of Hegel's method (cf. Garaudy, 1971, pp. 81–90), or that of his system by Marx (cf. Popitz, 1971, pp. 81–95).

One might ask whether both aspects of the Marxian critique of Hegel's dialectic, "beheading" and "inversion," should necessarily be associated. The "beheading" implies, in negative terms, a criticism of the derailment of the Hegelian dialectic once it turns the Idea into a necessity external to the real movement; in positive terms, it supposes an eagerness to return to the factual determinations of human beings. In our opinion, this double purpose can be lost when associated with the topic of "inversion." Indeed, the Feuerbachian demand to "return to the species-man" may become another resort to *abstraction*. Such an abstraction consists of dissociating aspects of the human to sanction that some of them possess a sort of ontological preeminence over some others. With this resort, the yearned return to the concrete can be a truncated vindication limited to a *change of essence*. Where Hegel hypostatized the Idea and mystified subjectivity, now Marx's Feuerbachian neo-Hegelianism would enable a change in the content of the falsification. To leave God aside or to abandon the supremacy of the Idea implies—by means of the inversion—the possibility

of throwing with it the understanding of the dialectical unity of the social whole in order to place a new unilaterality before it.

The centrality of the productive forces and the relations of production will not be properly formulated in Marx's work until *The German Ideology*, which he began to co-write in 1845; that is, a couple of years after this *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Nevertheless, in these early manuscripts appear the logical foundations by which this new centrality—proposed by Marx for the intellection of social history—evolved into a conception that promoted the vast Marxist determinisms that succeeded it. The shape of inversion is dissociative and abstract in itself, since it supposes essential modes of being that would be distorted and would have to be "turned right side up" in order to be apprehended in their reality. But an abstraction does not cease to be so because it shows the unilaterality of its opposite. The Nietzschean sentence, "It is dangerous to be an heir" (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 58), resounds here in a peculiar and even paradoxical way: *the vocation of inversion inherits the terms of inversion*. We note, then, that the object of the Marxian critique, the Hegelian philosophy of right, would contain a logic that endorses a certain sense of the transcendent and of its preeminence over the contingency of social interests, public consciousness, political mediations, and other instances of the life in common. Well, the shape of inversion does not resolve this abstract treatment of its object; it only *reorients the polarities* and establishes new hierarchies dissociating the integral movement from social activity. In the course of orthodox Marxism, this will be the setting for the classic elucubrations concerning "the superstructural": the place that corresponds to inessential human realities or those conceived under a *lower ontological status*. Not only ideologies, but also politics, the State, and the organization of the life in common will give way to the essentials of productive activity.

Of course, Marx's dialectic and his radical sense of totality were widely deployed in his political economy, in the historicity of his anthropological and historical-philosophical considerations, as well as in the political analyses we have referred. Our criticism is not directed against these dimensions of the Marxian works. We are more concerned with what—in our judgment—appears to be an inconsistency associated with the deterministic side that we now note and which compromises the conception of the common in a communist society of a Marxian stamp. This side strongly affects the expected place for political mediations of the social totality in a hypothetical communist society. We will return to this in

the next chapter. For now, we see that the Marxian confrontation against Hegel's philosophy of the State (via the "beheading" and the "inversion") forges Marx's bet for the abandonment of the mediations that disengage particular subjects from the common. For Marx, the proper dialectical understanding of social contradictions has to contribute to the critical conscience the discovery of the need to leave aside all mediation to return to the immediacy of the real human being reconciled with himself (cf. Stedman Jones, 2002, pp. 80–81). Thus, the bureaucracy, for example, would have an existence that is contraposed to, as well as mutually dependent on, the corporations of civil society from where it comes. Moreover, there would be no way to sublate this antagonism originated from the dissociation between State and civil society, except by abandoning the contraposition itself (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 45–49).

Marx's demand to Hegel, in terms of a coherent dialectic that makes *Aufhebung* of social dynamism instead of hypostatizing it by subjecting it to an external necessity and trivializing its immanent mediations, could be applied, in its turn, to Marx himself. In the dialectic proposed in the *Kreuznach Manuscript*, the contradiction is presented as a condition that is intolerable in itself and that must be outright abandoned, thus liquidating—no longer just trivializing—*all mediations that allow its reproduction*. In our judgment, if the dynamism of social life responds to the concrete—ergo differentiated—interests of particular subjects and not to its mere idealized generality, it would correspond not only to assume the movement of the contradiction but also the unavoidable reality of the mediations by which such interests historically resolve the conflict that results from their reciprocal relations. This is not the course of the Marxian dialectic that we encounter in the issue at hand. Rather, the solution of the social contradiction is here posed as an abandonment of some of its aspects or dimensions. This reasoning does not proceed, then, according to the pattern of the *determined negation* that confronts unilaterality. Although not in a precise conceptual distinction, "beheading" is associated with the mere "inversion" and "negation of mediations" instead of elevating the original elements of a given social shaping disposed toward its permanent reshaping. Thus, the perspective assumed is that of *suppression*, where what remains abandoned cannot know any reshaping—as is the case of the bureaucracy in this *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and of the political dimension of human activity in the whole of Marx's work.

This suppression appears as an immanent necessity under the deontological presumption of the return of man to himself, where *identity* (life in common) and *antagonism* (affirmation of the particular) cannot coexist, nor the practical unfoldment that produce and reproduce them. Against Hegel's "logical pantheism," Marx pleads for the urgency of the fusion of all that is human and the Feuerbachian privilege of *the immediate* as *the real*. Thus, the perspective of "inversion" bets for the change of polarity vis-à-vis Hegel's dialectic. This critical disposition goes further and culminates in the practical bet for restoring the "real man," removing the inessential mediations that have kept him tied up to remain in the identity of the simple, where the freedom of particular subjects can reside. A dialectic is outlined that is ready to renounce the negative and from which fundamental consequences will result for the way the political dimension of human activity is conceived. Not only because of the rejection of the mediations that—according to Marx's later studies—would characterize the civilization of capital and its predecessors. Also because of the resulting limitations for thinking the conditions of reproduction of a humanly emancipated praxis, once "the entire lumber of" political mediations in communist society is thrown "on the scrap heap" (Engels, 1990a, p. 190) of history.

3.2.3 Democracy and Redemption

The Marxian vocation to reverse polarities—and finally abandon the mediations established by Hegel's logic in his *Philosophy of Right*—finds in the discussion about the nature of the Constitution a special place to appreciate Marx's early positive bets regarding politics and life in the State. Faced with the mystical subsumption that makes the Constitution another predicate—in this case, monarchical—of the Idea, our author's approach will be to make "man" the principle of the Constitution:

> What would really follow would be simply the demand for a [C]onstitution which contains within itself the designation and the principle to advance along with consciousness, to advance as actual men advance, this is only possible when "man" has become the principle of the [C]onstitution. (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 19)

From the Feuerbachian horizon of his reflection, Marx is oriented toward a kind of *neo-Hegelian democratism*. This democratism would be openly

committed to the need for redemption that would free the human-species-being from the self-estrangement resulting from the ensemble of political mediations that have been subjugating it (cf. Rubel, 2003, p. 195).

In this way, faced with the enthronement of the monarch as the embodiment of the Idea and with the contradiction between the ideality of the State and the arbitrariness of a person, Marx expresses his own democratic perspective of sovereignty: "Democracy is the truth of monarchy" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 29). Besides the incipient characterization of democracy that Marx sets forth here, his exposition suggests the dissolution of the "political State," typical of his later communist convictions (cf. Popitz, 1971, p. 85). Democracy is affirmed as something different from a political regime: "In democracy the *abstract* [S]tate has ceased to be the dominant factor" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 98); it would rather be a state of reconciliation between the particular and political abstractions. There is no precise positive definition of such a democracy (cf. Rubel, 2003, p. 211), even if it is assumed to be already incubated in the current political institutions: "The *political* republic is democracy within the abstract state form" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 31).

One clue, although only in a negative form, comes from the peculiar Marxian conception of medieval political regimes, which were unaware of the abstract split between civil society and the State. In them, unlike what happens in the Modern Age,

> every private sphere has a political character or is a political sphere; that is, politics is a characteristic of the private spheres too. … In the Middle Ages the life of the nation and the life of the [S]tate are identical. (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 32)

This is why Marx can assert in terms that are extremely dissonant for our contemporary certainties: "The Middle Ages were the *democracy of unfreedom*," since "[m]an is the actual principle of the [S]tate—but *unfree* man" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 32). Furthermore, and contrary to the most progressive liberalism, the Middle Ages would be a democracy *without equality* (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 32). The peculiar democratic horizon of this young Marx loses hope in mediations to viabilize the unitary articulation of the diversity of aspirations and interests of modern civil society. Therefore, in the Middle Ages there was room for

something like a "government of the people," because, although deprived of freedom and equality, particular subjects were not unaware of themselves in the homogenizing abstraction of modern political life. Of course, this "government of the people" would be decided from the concrete forms of domination, immediately political, between the different social subjects ("*real* dualism"), which were left aside by the mediations of the modern political State in order to viabilize and reproduce themselves ("*abstract* dualism") (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 32). These are varieties of an estranged social life, varieties of what we have called "natural history" following *The German Ideology*, whether it is a social life that is immediately or mediately political.

Like Hegel, Marx turns to forms of pre-modern sociality to outline—if not normatively, at least analytically—an unalienated life in common, or what might constitute an *immediately political existence*. It could not be a political regime in the modern sense of the term. Rubel considers it Spinoza's contribution to the Marxian criticism of Hegel's philosophy of right, on the path to reconciliation between necessity and freedom against the foundations of modern political authority (property and bureaucracy) (cf. Rubel, 2003, pp. 196–199). In any case, the path to the *abandonment of politics* is already being paved and the challenge is to develop a "beyond politics": "The abstract state form of democracy is therefore the republic; but here it ceases to be the *merely political* constitution" (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 31).

That the Constitution ceases to be *merely political* would suppose its reencounter with its true basis: the people (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 57; Abensour, 2011, pp. 48 ff.). Here the political State would no longer be dissociated from the real State, and—in line with constitutional democracy—the Legislative Power would have the hegemony typical of the French revolutionary atmosphere (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 57). The motivation at play is the already mentioned suppression of mediations. This implies the rejection of the inherent contradictions between the Constitution that is given and that which is effectively acted upon by the Legislative Power (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 55–56), as well as the abandonment of that "deformity" that are the Courts (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 64); a deformed institution because its universal political content never completely abandons the particularity of its estate roots. This is contraposed to the incessant eagerness for representation coming from the diversity of civil society. For Marx, this eagerness is the result of his members' interest in turning political society into the real society,

where one would expect to obtain prominence and to advance one's own interests (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 118).

The Marxian alternative will be to find a *rational solution* to the irrationality of the world (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 64–65). From this follows that the affairs of the Courts should be "the affairs of *all*," which does not mean that in "a really rational [S]tate" all should "*individually* participate in deliberating and deciding on the general affairs of the [S]tate," although "the individuals as all" should do so (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 116). This supposes a unique bond between each particular subject and politics as a whole. Democratic representation here presupposes that every member of the State, as a part of it, participates—by definition—of public affairs; otherwise, there would be no *real belonging* (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, pp. 117–118). At this point Marx relaxes his categorical rejection of the necessity of mediation. Democratic representation would be a form of mediation, one that Marx maintains, arguing that since society is not reduced to the individual, the individual cannot "do everything at once," when in fact he is part of an ensemble of social relations that "both lets him act for others and others for him" (cf. *Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 118). Aiming at political de-alienation, such a representation should be established according to what each subject of civil society *is* and *does*. Otherwise, we will not be able to prevent it from becoming part of the known aporias that are product of the modern dissociation between civil society and the State. Here the assumption to be made—which is evident given the social complexity inherent to the Modern Age—is that *not everyone can do everything*. Marx portrays it as a *non-theological conception of representation*:

> In this case, it is nonsense to raise a demand which has arisen only from the notion of the political [S]tate as a phenomenon separated from civil society, which has arisen only from the *theological* notion of the political [S]tate. In this situation the significance of the *legislative* power as a *representative* power completely disappears. The legislative power is representation here in the sense in which *every* function is representative—in the sense in which, e.g., the shoemaker, insofar as he satisfies a social need, is my representative, in which every particular social activity as a species-activity merely represents the species, i.e., an attribute of my own nature, and in which every person is the representative of every other. He is here representative not because of something else which he represents but because of what he *is* and *does*. (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 119)

Amid the profound vocation for the negation of the political mediations—which will define Marx's communist convictions in the future—these lines favorable to a shape of democratic representation of a functional nature provide a glimpse of a positive counterpart for rethinking the life in common; moreover, in an evocative Feuerbachian vein. However, Marx soon turns against mediations. He believes that the perfection of this shape—that would elevate without alienation the existence of civil society to political society—and of universal suffrage should ultimately mean the abandonment of the contraposition between civil society and the State, moving beyond their mutual abstraction and rejection, toward their dissolution:

> In actually positing its *political existence* as its *true* existence, civil society has simultaneously posited its civil existence, in distinction from its political existence, as *inessential;* and the fall of one side of the division carries with it the fall of the other side, its opposite. *Electoral reform* within the *abstract political [S]tate* is therefore the demand for its *dissolution,* but also for the *dissolution of civil society*. (*Kreuznach Manuscript*, p. 121)

There returns, then, the eagerness for a simplicity and ultimate harmony or a full resolution of social contradictions. Of course, it remains to be determined what this dissolution of the political would mean. To begin with, in terms of the viability of social life, given the initial contrapositions between the particular subjects of civil society. If any political mediation is condemned as alienation, then human conflicts between individuals and collectives would also disappear; or well, if they persisted, they could be resolved without any mediation concerning the life in common, i.e., without political mediation, but according to some spontaneity capable of such a resolution.

By way of recapitulation, we can identify the following sequence in the course we have presented of the Marxian critique of Hegel's philosophy of the State: (a) negation of the mystical transcendence of the Idea in order to understand the effective contrapositions between the State and society; (b) inversion of the polarities that sustain such transcendence; and, finally, (c) abandonment of the political-state mediations. After that, the return of man to his immediately social and species condition would constitute the possibility of a redemption that dispenses with politics. Marx is here a severe critic of the Hegelian evasion of the real conditions of the conflict between civil society and State, with its vocation to subsume

the diversity of human interests in the singularity of the Crown, hypostatized according to the determinations of the Idea. Now, what is the scenario resulting from the redeemed sociality that is intended by Marx? Considering that we continue in the world of different human interests in the richness of their sensitive particularity, one might ask: How will their harmony be possible, or at least the feasibility of their life in common, there where no longer exists a mediating instance that "is elevated" above them under the pretense of representing them all?

The matter refers to the ontological weight of the conflict when conceiving a humanly emancipated society. From this, the following logical question arises: Is the dialectic the real-rational structuring that culminates in its self-negation and in the calm of undifferentiated harmonies, that is, unaffected by unfoldment and mediation? Or is it rather the inexhaustible need to think unity in contradiction? Marx criticized the first variety in Hegel, but he does not seem to be exempt from that path. This is why we pointed out the risk of associating the "beheading" of the Hegelian system with the vocation of "inversion" and negation of mediations that interest our author in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Such a vocation for inverting would lead to new dichotomies, new essential presuppositions and, with it, to lose the possibility of articulating the effective differences resulting from modern life.

From now on, once the work of "inversion" has been consummated, the field would be ready—in the Marxian *idea*, now in lower case—to liquidate the practical unfoldment that constitute our sociality. The species-being would be submerged in some comforting calmness free from the agitations inherent to the activity of our species or its self-realization: the termination of the mediations. The dialectic would be valid, then, for the critique of political alienation, but it would not be equally assumed by Marx for thinking positively the terms of a politically non-estranged life between social subjects. Now, since they are subjects resulting from the historical evolution of modern societies, they could not be immediately ascribed to some substantial determination; whether it be the relationship with the land that Hegel reintroduced to justify some dialectical subterfuge, whether it be the Feuerbachian species-being assumed by Marx in the *Critique* we have just discussed. In this way, once distanced from substantive ascriptions in a humanly emancipated society,

the particularity of individuals and collectives would have to deal with their differences and contrapositions beyond political mediations.

3.3 Reduction of Politics to an Administrative Technique

As we have seen in this chapter, the contingency of the political dimension of human activity in Marx's work responds to its desubstantialization and to the rejection of its mediations, those by which social domination has been exerted at the expense of "man himself." The ontological degradation of politics is also, in itself, a third presupposition sustaining this contingency. Besides the topic of "inversion," which proposes a given ontological hierarchy among the different dimensions of human activity, we refer here to the *reifying treatment* of politics; that is, to the reduction of politics to an *administrative technique* that is defined by its condition of an *instrument* at the service of certain class interests throughout "natural history." The Marxian representation of communism as a society in which politics could be dispensed with finds a crucial point of support here. As a product of the class organization of society, a society without classes would be one where the being of politics itself would become *empty*.

The writings of political analysis are again of great value to us, since they contain what is perhaps the most problematic crystallization of this reduction: the thesis that the political form of the revolution is to be identified with the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The reifying treatment of politics allows us to understand this dimension of human activity, either as an *instrument of domination* or as an *instrument of emancipation*. In both cases, political power is not only inessential in relation to the social interests that sustain it, but a mediation whose existence would be mechanically derived from those interests. It would be, therefore, a strictly instrumental resource that can never add more reality to the *cause* that originates it. Thus, this resource can only be known as a completely unilateral existence, absolutely subordinated to those interests; i.e., the interests arising from the class structure of society.

Thus, as a mechanically conceived instrument of domination, the State appears as a machine ready for repression (cf. *The Civil War in France*, p. 329). Engels would emphasize more than once the repressive power of the State as a machine. Already in the Introduction he wrote in 1895 for the reprint of *The Civil War in France*, he states:

> In reality, however, the [S]tate is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another, and indeed in the democratic republic no less than in the monarchy; and at best an evil inherited by the proletariat after its victorious struggle for class supremacy. (1990a, p. 190)

And like any machine—in convergence with Hobbes' mechanical philosophy—it can be manufactured as well as finally discarded at will:

> [T]he victorious proletariat, just like the Commune, cannot avoid having to lop off [the worst sides of this machine] at once as much as possible until such time as a generation reared in new, free social conditions is able to throw the entire lumber of the [S]tate on the scrap heap. (1990a, p. 190)

The notion that the modern State *is an instrument* of the bourgeois class offers a key to a strict reading of all the political activity carried out under its framework. In this way—at least within the framework of political emancipation—the development of social activity can only be achieved through certain political-legal forms that reproduce class-based social structures. However, given its ontological subordination, the legal presumption of a sacrosanct "established order" will have to make a permanent effort to "catch up" with the progress of social development that gives it its place and meaning.[6] In the event of a dispute between two established political powers, the mechanical approach at hand consistently appeals to the *force* or *power* that resolves the dispute. The issue arises in connection with the trial against Marx himself as part of the Rhenish District Committee of Democrats in 1849. In his indictment, the Public Prosecutor's Office cited laws of the German National Assembly that the very Crown it represented had trampled on.

> That this was a struggle between two powers, and only power can decide between two powers—that, gentlemen, has been declared by both the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary press. … Power against power. Victory would decide between them. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 325)

In *Capital*, a classic sentence reads: "Between equal rights force decides" (*Capital I*, p. 243, in Marx, 1996). For this decisive element,

[6] Cf. Marx's speech at "The First Trial of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*" in *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 304–317.

the German term used by Marx that here is translated by "force" (translation followed in the French edition revised by Marx) is "Gewalt," which can also be translated by "power" or "violence." In any case, the appeal to the mechanical movement of the *force* paves the way to the *dictatorship of the proletariat* and to the Marxian conception of *revolutionary politics*. At the revolutionary moment in Germany during the summer of 1848, the incessant disputes between the Crown and the German National Assembly demanded—according to Marx—a more energetic stance from the progressive sections of the bourgeoisie (the same ones that succeeded, although sheepishly and inconsequently, in instituting an assembly against the monarchical and aristocratic forces):

> Every provisional political set-up following a revolution requires a dictatorship, and an energetic dictatorship at that. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 431; cf. *The Class Struggles in France*, p. 98).

It also demands the rejection of the purism of *constitutional principles* where they are no longer applicable:

> In any unconstituted state of affairs it is solely the *salut public*, the public welfare, and not this or that principle that is the decisive factor. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 431)

The *democratic support* of this vindication is expressed in regard to the "right of the democratic popular masses" before the constitutional assemblies (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 437).

Thus, for example, "freedom of debate" appears as a right that makes sense only under the protection of law (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 437); that is, in duly established constitutional frameworks. On the other hand, in revolutionary periods such as that of 1848, it ceases to make sense (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 437–438) and should be submitted to the logic of the revolution. In the same line, the legal basis, which has already fulfilled its historical role, is dissociated from the revolutionary basis which is about to fulfill it:

> We have never concealed the fact that ours is not a *legal basis*, but a *revolutionary basis*. Now the Government for its part has abandoned the false pretense of a legal basis. It has taken its stand on a revolutionary basis, for the *counter-revolutionary* basis, too, is *revolutionary*. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 154)

If modern technique is a mediation without substance and politics becomes reified, then there will be no problem that any of its mediations can be used in all its *purified* and *aseptic* scope; whether it is the regime established by a proletarian government, revolutionary violence, or universal suffrage. After all, they are all instruments that respond to the *external* social interest that establishes and encourages them. Instruments free from any other consideration that restricts them to be exercised even to the point of revolutionary terrorism, a very problematic issue in the context of the 1848 revolutions (cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 505–506). Undoubtedly, a very complex issue, since, in the revolutionary scenarios motivating these writings, we are faced with situations of war and of *life or death struggle* between different social interests (cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 453; *The Class Struggles in France*, pp. 69–70, 109). This is not a justification of violence *in abstracto*, but rather vindications along the lines of "the midwife of history" (cf. *Capital I*, p. 739). Of course, as Marxist totalitarian experiences of the twentieth century taught, the practical impossibility of distinguishing definitively between revolutionary period and post-capitalist society, between socialism and communism, etc., can turn the reifying treatment of politics into an opportunity for justifying the exercise of violence against human emancipation. And all this under the immensity of resources available to a "revolutionary" State.

According to the second of the *Theses on Feuerbach*: "Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice" (p. 3). Well, a mechanical and desubstantiating variation of Marxian ontology could validate force as a mechanical reality subject to a particular social interest—following the reasoning that *the true* is *the practical*, ergo *the triumphant*[7] (cf. Marx's article "The Crisis in Berlin" in *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 3–4)—where nothing else could be added. Whether it is about universal suffrage, revolutionary violence, or the dictatorship of the proletariat, this view of political action does not recognize a *content of its own* in such an action. It would be, rather, a discreet and limited means, capable of proceeding exclusively from the unilateral perspective of a given social power. What, then, would be a dictatorship? It would be the non-consulted and/or non-consensual exercise of political power from the unilaterality of a class or socio-economic interest

[7] I am grateful to Dr. César Guadalupe for this epistemic-political connection that I began to outline years ago from his seminars at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

associated with the productive structure of society. It follows, then, that the political is but *class representation*. The double character that would thus characterize political regimes is patently expressed in the fate of the French peasantry in the 1848 revolution: "The *constitutional republic* is the dictatorship of his [of the peasant] united exploiters; *the social-democratic, the Red* republic, is the dictatorship of his allies" (*The Class Struggles in France*, p. 122).

As a result, phenomena such as violence or the dictatorial exercise of political power do not find a uniform valuation in the Marxian writings (cf. Miliband, 1965, Section V). They cannot have it because, from this perspective, it would be wrong to appreciate them *in themselves*. Consequently, neither can it be maintained that the Marxian discourse has an inescapable commitment against electoral practices recurrently stigmatized as "bourgeois" by Marx. Needless to say, this approach was widely exploited by later Marxist orthodoxy (cf. Moore, 1957, Chapter 3) and not least by its detractors. Faced with passages in which the "dictatorship" can incorporate electoral mechanisms—as when "bourgeois dictatorship" is referred to (cf. *The Class Struggles in France*, p. 107)—there are others in which universal suffrage constitutes the antithesis that confronts the dictatorial power in an emancipatory perspective:

> The foundation of the constitution, however, is *universal suffrage. Annihilation of universal suffrage*—such is the last word of the [P]arty of Order, of the bourgeois dictatorship. (*The Class Struggles in France*, p. 130)

Dictatorship may, then, find a resource in universal suffrage, but this resource may also oppose it. Thus it was established when faced with its abolition, once it became less favorable to the interests of the so-called Party of Order in 1850:

> Bourgeois rule as the outcome and result of universal suffrage, as the express act of the sovereign will of the people—that is the meaning of the bourgeois constitution. But has the [C]onstitution any further meaning from the moment that the content of this suffrage, of this sovereign will, is no longer bourgeois rule? Is it not the duty of the bourgeoisie so to regulate the suffrage that it wills the reasonable, its rule? By ever and anon putting an end to the existing state power and creating it anew out of itself, does not universal suffrage put an end to all stability, does it not every moment question all the powers that be, does it not annihilate authority, does it not threaten to elevate anarchy itself to the position of authority?

> After March 10, 1850, who would still doubt it [date when universal suffrage was abolished]? (*The Class Struggles in France*, pp. 130–131)

The tragicomedy of this process concludes when the "Party of Order" itself is overthrown by Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état on December 2, 1851, and its restorationist members oppose it by appealing to universal suffrage and cheering for the Republic (cf. Maguire, 1978, Chapter 4). Marx showed no mercy to them:

> The believers in Universal Suffrage are naturally unwilling to dispense with the miraculous power which has worked such great things with them, which has transformed Bonaparte II into a Napoleon, a Saul into a Paul and a Simon into a Peter. The popular spirit speaks to them through the ballot box as the God of the Prophet Ezekiel spoke to the dry bones: "Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 193, note c)

And their agonizing prayer concludes: "Holy Universal Suffrage, plead for us!" (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 193, note c) From which the *merely functional* role of universal suffrage with respect to certain interests of social domination can be inferred. It is indeed an instrument and no commitment to it can carry *its own necessity*:

> By repudiating universal suffrage, with which it hitherto draped itself and from which it sucked its omnipotence, the bourgeoisie openly confesses, "*Our dictatorship has hitherto existed by the will of the people; it must now be consolidated against the will of the people*." (*The Class Struggles in France*, p. 131)

Now, this is not only about discerning the type of analysis used by Marx for the course of the political-revolutionary situations at hand. It should also be noted that this is a political judgment that coincides with the mechanical rationality of the very bourgeois rule. Thus, universal suffrage—valued as unessential by itself—appears as a merely technical mediation from the perspective of the revolutionary struggle that promotes it; as necessary as any apparatus is by virtue of its pre-established foundational purposes:

> Universal suffrage had fulfilled its mission. The majority of the people had passed through the school of development, which is all that universal suffrage can serve for in a revolutionary period. It had to be set aside by a revolution or by the reaction. (*The Class Struggles in France*, p. 137)

Under the same technical reduction of the political struggle, the issue is expressed against the current of the later formulations of orthodox Marxism. Thus, in the *Programme of the Parti Ouvrier* of 1880, coauthored with Guesde, Marx becomes explicit on this point.[8] In spite of several later Marxist dogmatics, he went so far as to consider that universal suffrage could be an *instrument of emancipation*:

> That a such an organization must be pursued by all the means the proletariat has at its disposal including universal suffrage which will thus be transformed from the instrument of deception that it has been until now into an instrument of emancipation. (Marx & Guesde, 1880)[9]

In this way, although revolutions are "*the locomotives of history*" (*The Class Struggles in France*, p. 122), the possibility of a peaceful path to socialism appears:

> But we by no means claimed that the means for achieving this goal were identical everywhere.
>
> We know that the institutions, customs and traditions in the different countries must be taken into account; and we do not deny the existence of countries like America, England, and if I knew your institutions better I might add Holland, where the workers may achieve their aims by peaceful means. That being true we must also admit that in most countries on the Continent it is force which must be the lever of our revolution; it is force which will have to be resorted to for a time in order to establish the rule of the workers. (*On The Hague Congress*, p. 255, in Marx, 1988a)

More has been said concerning the plausibility of this peaceful path for the proletarian revolution from Marxian sources. For example, there is

[8] See Rubel's article "El partido proletario en Marx" (2003, p. 223), and Marx's letters to Engels (May 1, 1865) and Kugelmann (January 15, 1866) (cf. Rubel 2003, n. 23).

[9] Incidentally, this document is referred by Engels in his Introduction to the 1895 edition of *The Class Struggles in France* (cf. 1990b, p. 516).

extensive literature discussing the Leninist interpretation of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" to suggest that its eminently social and economic character could enable both a democratic and a non-democratic execution of it (cf. Hook, 1973; Schaff, 1973, pp. 264–267). One can even point to expressions about the pacifist content of a proletarian government, in the context of the Civil War in France in 1870:

> in contrast to old society, with its economical miseries and its political delirium, a new society is springing up, whose International rule will be *Peace,* because its national ruler will be everywhere the same—*Labour*! (*The Civil War in France*, p. 7)

Thus, it is not possible to derive from the writings we are analyzing any abstract, naive or fanatical hail of violence or dictatorship, nor of their opposites. At the same time, the instrumental reduction of politics (technical asepsis) at hand prevents us from broadly gauging the emancipatory scope of the shapes we have encountered, such as universal suffrage. Both the dictatorship and universal suffrage, to the extent they can be understood from the reifying treatment of the political, are mere instruments of domination or emancipation, as the case may be. There is no proposal for unconditional attachment to a determinate form. The emptiness of their content, or their external definition, dictates the contingency of their form. In any case, political power proves once again to be inessential. Hence, the iron identity between social classes and political domination is open to the contingency of a violent or peaceful revolutionary path, a contingency subject to the need to overthrow political domination in accordance with the variable historical circumstances of the situation.

As for the revolutionary perspective of the proletariat, the recourse to its dictatorship is presented as the tactically necessary means to realize the strategic vision of communism. Hence its transitory character:

> If the political struggle of the working class assumes violent forms and if the workers replace the dictatorship of the bourgeois class with their own revolutionary dictatorship … to crush the resistance of the bourgeois class, they, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the State, give to the State a revolutionary and transitory form. (*Political Indifferentism*, p. 393, in Marx, 1988b)

What then should be the role of the State from an emancipatory perspective for Marx? According to his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*,

the eventuality of a "future State" should envisage, in the first place, the radical alteration of its current bases or foundations: the "modern bourgeois society" (pp. 94–95). Marx puts it as follows:

> The question then arises: what transformation will the [S]tate undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 95)

Progress is made in indicating that the issue should be resolved scientifically (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 95). Nonetheless, beyond the considerations already outlined on the limitations of "bourgeois right" and the determinations of civilizing scope on the new terms of organization of production and distribution that we have already dealt with, the answers remain to be clarified. In this *Critique*—one of the most explicit Marxian works on communism—the issue is concluded by pointing out the need for a political period of transition between capitalist society and communist society: the period of revolutionary transformation, "in which the [S]tate can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 95; cf. Poulantzas, 2008). Marx immediately points out that the *Gotha Programme* is silent on this matter; however, we must add, not much more than he himself is silent on its political characterization.

Considering the Marxian presumption that the reach of consciousness is given by the historically shaped social being (*The German Ideology*, pp. 36–37, passim), it is worth asking about the limits of Marx's reflection on the political forms of proletarian emancipation. Special attention should be paid to the evolution of the successive political forms that were born in the midst of the bourgeois society Marx knew, and which today we can consider early forms. Both the development of these forms, as well as that of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century—both fascist and Soviet-inspired—motivate us to rethink the political forms of the revolution against capital, as well as its post-capitalist institutional forms, whether socialist or communist. But for Marx the outcome was established in his time: the abolition of the State after the period of transition. The society of freely associated producers will have to face their life in common without the existence of an institution resulting from it and ruling over it, contrary to what has been taking place in the history

of social classes. The viability of the communist enterprise therefore gives the State a role of a modestly instrumental mediation.

The *Communist Manifesto* points out "that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy" (p. 504). Here again, this kind of double sign of dictatorship/democracy we have been referring to is presented. Sánchez proposes a characterization of "democracy" as a Marxian concept whose historical reality progresses in socialism as the State disappears. Thus, it would be a fundamental concept of Marx from which the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—which would be a less fundamental concept—can be understood as a "democratic republic" where the majority exerts its class domination (by force) over their former oppressors and in a transitory way (cf. Sánchez, 1983). The instrumental view of political power, by which the State is an epiphenomenal dimension of social activity, is henceforth established for future Marxist orthodoxy in this *Manifesto*. Here, we find one of its most categorical statements: "The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 486).[10] This reduction that instrumentalizes the political (as a mere technique at the service of the private property of the means of production) is short of tools for thinking the management of the common in a context where the revolutionary activity against capital would have been successful.

Regarding the challenges of revolutionary political activity, the final orientation ends up being the same in propositions and polemics. For example, faced with Proudhon's rejection of revolutionary action on behalf of a better economic combination of wealth[11], the rejection of political alienation for Marx implies the need for revolutionary politics: "Do not say that social movement excludes political movement. There is never a political movement which is not at the same time social" (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 212, in Marx, 1976a). The terms of this Marxian vindication of politics are revealing for our investigation: the directionality "the political presupposes the social" disregards the opposite sense according to which the social would also presuppose the political. Thus,

[10] For a liberal critique of *this* instrumental vision of the State and the political forms in capitalism, as well as its consequent "total exclusion" in communism, cf. Máiz (1992, pp. 147–152).

[11] Cf. Proudhon's letter to Marx of May 17, 1846 (1846).

the political dimension would be the determination characteristic of an inadequately deployed human activity. It would respond to a still limited historical necessity from the viewpoint of a more complete realization of the freedom of the producers. Its contingency would be given by certain concrete circumstances that would determine it and confer it a limited role in historical progress.[12] Hence:

> It is only in an order of things in which there are no more classes and class antagonisms that *social evolutions* will cease to be *political revolutions*. (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 212)

It is estimated, then, that politics will no longer be necessary for the deployment of freedom in a society of freely associated individuals not subject to class domination or the alienation of labour resulting from it.

Faced with the Proudhonian discredit of the potential of a proletarian revolution in any variety—whether self-managed or led by intellectual sectors (cf. Kessler, 2004, pp. 57–58)—Marx responds to Proudhon's peculiar socialism by assimilating it to the recipes of the economists:

> The economists want the workers to remain in society as it is constituted and as it has been signed and sealed by them in their manuals.
>
> The socialists want the workers to leave the old society alone, the better to be able to enter the new society which they have prepared for them with so much foresight. (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 210)

Marx bets, instead, for coalitions and their political scope, Trade Unions and Chartism (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, pp. 209–210). In turn, the social struggle for wages becomes a political struggle when the very wages are staked for deploying the workers' general competition against capital and, with it, to defend the coalition and its vindications: "Once it has reached this point, association takes on a political character" (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 211). The moment when the working classes become—in a Hegelian turn—*for themselves* would be the moment of politics, the

[12] There are also epistemological repercussions in relation to the allegedly *illusory character* of the political dynamisms that a large part of the Marxist tradition has repeatedly affirmed. The *unreality* of politics would refer, in this tradition, to its limited historical necessity or to the *contingency of its necessity*, one from which our species would finally escape in a humanly emancipated society.

moment when class interests take the form of a political struggle (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 211).

And yet, the political remains only a means, the path or the transit to human emancipation; that is, *revolutionary politics*. It is never an active condition that makes such emancipation a reality in itself and through its own reproduction; reproducing it either as a communist mode of production, or as a common definition of the issues that concern all the associated producers, such as the care for the needs of production of life and the disposition of social wealth, among others. On the contrary, political power is established as a *technical resource* of the ruling classes for ensuring their socio-economic domination. With greater or lesser clarity, also the economists who praise the virtues of the commodity-capitalist economy—or the simple apologists who celebrate and naturalize political life along the liberal standard that it is but a "necessary evil"—assume in theory and/or in practice this presumption: *politics is an instrument* at the service of the social interest. Once the instrument becomes unnecessary, it must be thrown away.

This presumption is transferred to the Marxian conception of communism; in particular, to the representation of its political dimension. Even if it is under an immensely greater historical consciousness and commitment to individual freedom, Marx here subscribes to a variety of the fetishistic commitment of the bourgeois horizon in his understanding of the political reduced to technique: the fetishism of the "invisible hand" of the market gives way here to the fetishism of the "communist technique" which should be able to deal with the management of the common. In both cases, the liberal presuppositions mentioned above are adopted: the artificiality of the political and the bet for the spontaneity (denial of mediations) of social becoming. In Marx's case, we must keep noting the tension expressed in this sort of double profile we have been showing. On the one hand, his work enables us to recognize the historical-social genesis of the technical mediations of human activity. On the other hand, with regard to communism, the summoned technique (i.e., politics thus reduced) is now naturally conceived as the mediation capable of resolving *by itself* the requirements of human activity; of that activity which originally produced it and which made possible its entire historical development. This is why *politics* cannot be thought of as *life in common*. It can only be so, if at all, as an *estranged life in common*, whose usefulness expires on the scene of "human emancipation." Indeed, it does not seem possible in principle, based on Marx, to think politics outside of its

usefulness for class domination; specifically, outside of the instrumentalist pattern of modern technique deployed according to the guidelines of capitalist market. In a nutshell, it does not seem possible to think politics in non-bourgeois terms, in terms of what would be "human history."

3.4 Modern Convergences Against Political Power

We have specified some convergences of Marx with the liberal conceptions regarding the exercise of political power, convergences that reach the anarchist tradition inaugurated by Proudhon among the French socialists. Of course, the differences between Marx and this tradition are vast, although we cannot dwell on them here. They all share the principle of the priority of the individual over the State. It is a sort of fundamental civilizing premise that situates liberal, anarchist, and even Marxian approaches as *modern perspectives* on the relationship between the particular and the common in the midst of the post-feudal West. Our critical viewpoint is not directed against this convergence in the bet for individual freedom. Rather, it focuses on its specific valuation of the political dimension of human activity as a threat to, or an effective denial of, individual freedoms. These traditions prioritize the interest for caring and promoting freedom in modern terms; i.e., in accordance with a recognition of the particular agents individuated by the specific composition and structure of commodity-capitalist societies. Whether immediate or mediated, such an interest is presented as a denial of political life, of its own agency, and of the power at its disposal.

The image of the State as a "necessary evil" is echoed in different ways in each of these perspectives. For the liberal, it is presented in terms of the "invisible hand" of the market, accompanied by the expectation that political power be limited, to the extent possible, to a function of law enforcement and/or administration of impersonal justice; the more invisible, the better. For the anarchist, it is expressed in the demand to end once and for all, without any mediation, the oppression that any State would represent per se for the individuals. Finally, it is affirmed in the Marxian banner of the "dictatorship of the proletariat": an undesirable instrument that affirms the momentary persistence of a sphere alienated from the praxis that rises over the whole of social activity. Far from representing some form of political vindication, as liberal vulgarity tends to

assume, it is an instrument that can only be used *in the meantime*. Moreover, it is an ambiguous instrument, of a democratic nature from the viewpoint of its executors and of a dictatorial nature for its opponents; where the boundary between one and the other is—to say the least—quite problematic (cf. Rodríguez, 1996; Atienza, 2008, pp. 17–18). In any case, it is a *mere means* for the emancipation that will result in the *abandonment of the political*, in the experience of the social as a life in common free of mediations that distort it and that are motive, occasion, and reality of the oppression of some individuals over others.

Apropos of the conditions for human emancipation stemming from the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production, *The Poverty of Philosophy* formulates the termination of this dimension of praxis, politics:

> Does this mean that after the fall of the old society there will be a new class domination culminating in a new political power? No. (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, pp. 212)

Although in much narrower terms than in other parts of Marx's work, it is again formulated: (a) the emancipatory rupture, understood as the total and abrupt termination of the existing social relations of domination, and (b) the unavoidable abolition of all forms of domination and political action, so that access to a non-estranged, properly human, mode of social organization becomes possible (cf. *The German Ideology*, pp. 77–81 passim). As we already showed, the strength of these assertions is based on the affirmation of a progressive historical evolution:

> The condition for the emancipation of the working class is the abolition of all classes, just as the condition for the emancipation of the third estate, of the bourgeois order, was the abolition of all estates and all orders. (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, pp. 212)

The bet for emancipatory rupture refers to the shape of the termination of a certain specific ensemble of relationships rather than to an absolute teleological bet. Just as the bourgeoisie dissolved a certain structure of feudal relations in order to secure its interests, the proletariat would have to do the same with the structure of bourgeois relations and with class structures in general. The final result of this revolutionary activity is that the exercise of political power would come to an end:

> The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society. (*The Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 212)

The "properly so-called" refers to the juridical-political reality of class domination, whether we are dealing with modern societies or not. In modern societies, specially, the dissociation and dislocation between the private and the public makes it necessary that particular interests can only be asserted "by means of a detour." Thus they arrive at the plane of the common, externalizing themselves and—especially in the case of dominated social classes—turning against themselves in the process. In sum, our most recent quotation offers a diagnosis and a decidedly anarchist perspective, entirely analogous to Proudhon's proposals in *What is Property?*: "The government of man by man, under whatever name it is disguised, is oppression" (1994, p. 216).

* * *

Considering to the statements on the political dimension of praxis we have found in Marx's work, the distinction between "the State," "the public," and "politics" (or even the "political State" as in the *Kreuznach Manuscript*) is highly problematic. It responds to different presentation circumstances decided according to: (a) the purpose of each writing (theoretical works, political documents, dissemination and propaganda materials, drafts not intended for publication, etc.); (b) the themes treated in them; or (c) the maturity of the formulations according to the course of reasoning followed in each case and to the moment to which they correspond in Marx's work. The absence of a systematic work by Marx on the political dimension of praxis has resulted in countless difficulties (cf. Bobbio, 1997, Chapter, VII, Section 3.1), including that of conceiving a "non-political State" from the conceptual resources traditionally associated with this notion, such as the repressive function (cf. Bobbio, 1997, Chapter XIII). Our investigation is unable to conclude an always univocal meaning for each of these designations. These are notions that refer to practical decisions that involve the whole of human activity, or to the terms in which the social totality is reproduced through the exercise of power in community above particular distinctions.

On many occasions, in most of them in fact, Marx tends not to differentiate these denominations, or not to establish a line of systematization that, like a political theory, sanctions a conceptual categorization of them. Thus, in the articles of the *German-French Annals*, *On the Jewish Question*—in response to *The Jewish Question* by the neo-Hegelian Bruno Bauer (1958)—and the *Introduction*, "the public" is formulated decisively around the tearing that its existence entails. It would be a split plane where the particular ends up confronted with a universality that is but the interest of some mystified and hypostatized in the form of the State. In *The German Ideology* and the *Communist Manifesto*, "the political" becomes synonymous with "what concerns the State," hence the talk of a "non-political public power":

> When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 505)

It would therefore be a "non-political public power" which, in the terms we have just referred to in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, would not be a political power "properly so-called" (p. 212). But the issue is problematic as it seems that "the public"—understood as the human tearing par excellence in the *German–French Annals*—is disrupted under a traceable conceptual continuity in the "general illusory community" of *The German Ideology* (Chapter 1), which leads us back to the indistinction between "the public" and "the political." Between "the public" and "the political" a scenario is, then, presented where conceptual distinctions remain to be made and which—in our opinion—should be made in favor of the management of the common in a communist society of a Marxian stamp. Compared to both denominations, "the State" appears regularly as the institutionalized and legally organized form for the exercise of this power. As such, the meaning of its presence in Marx's writings is usually much more legible and precise than in the other cases.

Based on Marx's ethnological readings of the primitive commune and its dissolution (cf. *Ethnological Notebooks*, in Marx, 1974), Maguire proposes distinguishing in the Marxian vocabulary between "government" and "politics." Whereas the former would correspond to the administration of the general affairs of all social formations (with or without social classes), the latter would be a form of government peculiar

to societies with social classes, excluding here the "primitive commune" and "mature communism" (cf. Maguire, 1978, pp. 221–222, 229–229). The distinction converges with the proposal we will defend regarding the unwavering consideration of the common in a post-capitalist communist society:

> The government, in communal society, is simply the particular part of the whole social system which deals with general questions, at successive levels of generality. (Maguire, 1978, pp. 230–231)

Maguire, however, does not attend to the specific conditions of constitution of the individuals that from the capitalist society engender its replacement. For that reason, he stays in a general register of considerations about the need for such an administration and its scope in post-capitalist communism. This generality is embodied in the lack of differentiation between post-capitalist communism and primitive communism—expressed in references to the "magnitude" and "complexity" of the requirements of their respective economies. Likewise, although a valuable line of reflection around these Marx's reading notes is thus offered, the distinction between "government" and "politics" does not seem to be formulated, let alone elaborated, in other places of the Marxian work.

Back to Marx, the noticeable indistinction between the terms referred to ("the State," "the public," "politics") implies that the negation of any of them entails the liquidation of that dimension of praxis where the social powers act as the powers of all the members of a given social formation. Not less difficult is the permanence of the invocation of "society" (*die Gesellschaft*) in the writings in which Marx deals with communism. In principle, "the social" is that dimension established in the Modern Age together with the division of labour among mutually independent private producers who participate in a market and forge the capitalist relations of production. If the communist organization of the life in common is to sublate these historical determinations, it seems wise to reserve the term "community" (*die Gemeinschaft*) for it. Nevertheless, Marx inadvertently overlooks this. The point may be indicative of his disregard for the terms that would correspond to the representation of the common in a society that would have sublated the private property of the means of production.

Of course, this is not the place to resolve the impasse and state the political theory that would reframe the issue. We restrict ourselves here to a provisional decision: we will understand that the political activity

concerns the domain of the totality of intertwined human capacities and needs that constitute the *life in common*, where each particular agent both finds the conditions for the satisfaction of his interests and reveals himself as the producer of those conditions. In the case of a communist society, this political dimension expressed in "the common" can be neither the renewed fetishistic commitment to the "administration of things," in Engels' classic wording (1989, p. 321), nor the place to reproduce a variety of domination and estrangement of some human beings by the unilateral will of others.

In our view, the notion of communism in Marx shows a fundamental void and exposes an unmet theoretical need: the need to think the *management of the common* from the viewpoint of a humanity emancipated from class ties and from the powers at its service. On the basis of the above, communist society would sublate the pressures of immediate physical reproduction, and would do so in accordance with its historical preconditions of gestation, which supposed the emergence, alienation, and cultivation of an enriched individuality that was born under capitalism. Consequently, we propose that a life in common thus forged would have to deal—more than ever—with the differences positively provided by its members, as well as with the antagonisms that would result from the constitutive bet of such a community for the individual and collective self-realization, within a finite framework of physical, biological, psychological, and social possibilities.[13]

In attention to the void that concerns us, we call "Marx's liberalism" the vocation by which our author conceives the life in common in communism from the abolition or dissolution of the political dimension of praxis. As in the liberal tradition, Marx's work assumes that politics is an artifice without substance and a contingent mediation that can be taken or

[13] Concerning the weight of antagonism in contemporary democratic societies, Chantal Mouffe has defended the bet for a "radical democracy." Thus, she situates herself between liberalism and socialism in favor of the plurality of emancipatory vindications and the recognition of their inexhaustible conflict (cf. 1993). For Mouffe, the resolution of social antagonisms ought to have an "agonistic form" (cf. 2005, Chapter 4)—where dissent is not concealed in favor of certain ruling powers—which would make possible a sort of progressive deepening of liberalism towards socialist causes (cf. 2005, p. 188). Although the anthropological assumptions of this "liberal socialism" (cf. 1993) follow an egalitarianist route—which is contrary to the vindication of differences that we have traced in Marx—the recognition of conflict as an inexhaustible reality of the life in common converges with the proposal we will shortly present.

left aside, given its condition of a mere instrument. From these positive convergences with liberalism, emerges the—equally liberal—disposition to naturalize the conditions of the life in common in communist society, instead of problematizing them. All this, assuming that their requirements will be spontaneously resolved by means of the technique.

In the case of the communist horizon offered by Marx's thought, we can identify at least three fundamental issues to be problematized for thinking the management of the common: (a) the *will of the free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals* who—coming from the civilization of capital—would constitute the communist society; (b) the *conditions of economic reproduction* that this society would suppose in order to articulate the use of capacities in production with the satisfaction of needs in distribution; and (c) the political *conditions* for the management of a life in common which assumes—from the finitude of the social powers—the antagonism inherent to interindividual relations as well as among the various human collectives. The consideration of these issues guides the criticism that we will later develop. Perhaps the reduction of human products to technical resources is the point where are fully expressed the voids in the Marxian work when thinking the common from the horizon of a communist society are fully expressed. We have quoted the vibrant onslaught against private property of the means of production in the Paris Commune, where it was stated that means would become "*mere instruments* of free and associated labour" (*The Civil War in France*, p. 237, my emphasis). In our judgment, this reduction of social products to mere instrumentality is insufficient for thinking communism. Moreover, it is inadequate for making this a horizon that can plausibly sublate the management of the life in common and the civilizing achievements that capitalism has been deploying for centuries (cf. Mouffe, 2005, Chapter 4).

After what has been expounded about the determinations of a communist sociality, we can legitimately ask ourselves: what would be so "simple" about this treatment of the means of production? The reduction of the factors of production to "simple instruments" reveals the absence of a more radical reflection on the nature of the will that appropriates and manages these instruments. We refer to a radicality in the Marxian-Feuerbachian sense: the appeal to "man himself." The will of human beings is the one that would have to formulate certain interests and establish a certain complexity when designing the organization that would viabilize the communion of convergences and divergences, or open contrapositions, that may arise among the freely associated producers.

The modern presumption—which Marx here endorses without further ado—that dealing with instruments is a merely technical matter and, therefore, "simple" neglects that all instrumentality is *praxis* and, as such, refers to diverse human needs and interests. A matter that is in itself very complex to manage and satisfy. It is the will of individuals that, to begin with, provides the instrument with its character as such, precisely because they produce it and shape it from those needs and interests that decide the terms of its existence. Hence, despite Marx and the technocratic culture of liberalism, there cannot be *merely technical solutions* for *human affairs* and concretely—this is also fundamental—for thinking a communist society.

In our judgment, Marx's philosophical anthropology and political economy lay essential foundations to be developed for the treatment of the voids indicated around (a) the *will of free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals* and (b) the *conditions of their economic reproduction*, respectively, in a communist society. As for the third of these voids, regarding (c) the political *conditions* for the management of a life in common characteristic of communist society, the resources that Marx's work offers us are decidedly less. The recognition of this void reveals the need to address the previous ones, if we are to place ourselves in the perspective of a humanly emancipated society. This is why in the next chapter we will focus on the depth and seriousness of these three voids. Freed from the commodity-capitalist alienation and the surrender to the fortuity inherent to it, a communist society would instead demand the *conscious control* of its own reproduction. Likewise, and as we have explained, Marx's emancipatory horizon bets for the expansion of the potentialities of a free human activity that is reconciled with the differences in the framework of a certain historical metabolism with Nature. For this reason, we hold the following conviction: the neglect of the terms in which the antagonisms between individuals and between human collectives that concern the finite resources of the associated producers under this renewed social totality are faced—that is, the neglect of politics in communism—cannot but mean the surrender to utopianism and to the idealized hope that does not assume its historical conditions of existence and reproduction. We offer our argument in what follows.

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CHAPTER 4

Communist Politics and Management of the Life in Common

Pas d'antagonisme, pas de progrès.
—Karl Marx, *Misère de la philosophie*

In Marxian political economy, the disappearance of the domain of circulation is a necessary, and fundamental, condition of the communist mode of production. A communist society presupposes the collapse of private labour and, with it, of the need for a level that is phenomenically split from the domain of production; through whose mediation the interest in the valorization (production of surplus value) of capital can be consummated. At the beginning of our second chapter, we pointed out that the social forms of circulation, including monetary forms, would lose their purpose once the pattern of private labour was sublated; that is, the patterns typical of commodity-capitalist societies. With the collapse of the historical-social necessity of such forms, the circuit by which the products of social work became commodities or objects of exchange is broken. A disparity was established between the use values of these products, while their general exchangeability was guaranteed by their strictly social determination: the value resulting from the abstract work contained in each commodity. In the section on commodity fetishism of the First Chapter of *Capital*, the communist alternative would be that in which the product of labour appears as a *direct social* product (cf. *Capital I*, pp. 86–90, in Marx, 1996), where we find a "community of free individuals … in which

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the labour power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour power of the community" (*Capital I*, p. 89).

In a communist society, then, the process of mediation found in circulation would no longer be necessary. Once canceled the need for the exchange of equivalents, the processes of equalization that accompany it and that go through the reifying encounter between commodities become futile. Thus, the market loses the source of its historical necessity as a structure for the relationship of independent private producers. The equalizing level of circulation loses its meaning there where the recourse to abstraction has given way to a different articulation between the particular and the common; an articulation decided by the interest of the producers to satisfy their personal needs by the directly social harvesting of their different and better capacities. The productive activity, in turn, would be freed from the processes of alienation that result from this: the human efforts would no longer take the form of abstract work and of the negation of individual personality that carries with it.

> The communal character of production would from the outset make the product into a communal, general one. The exchange initially occurring in production, which would not be an exchange of exchange values but of activities *determined by communal needs and communal purposes*, would include from the beginning the individual's participation in the communal world of products. On the basis of exchange value, labour is *posited* as general labour only through *exchange*. On this basis [of the exchange of activities in production], labour would be posited as general labour prior to exchange, i.e. the exchange of products would not in any way be the medium mediating the participation of the individual in general production. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 108, in Marx, 1986, my emphasis)

Of course, the social mediation of the labours of individuals would take place, but in an immediate way, as they are part of the same social force that does not know its unfoldment in circulation, but that is revealed in its unity in the productive process itself: "*The labour of the individual is from the outset taken as social labour*" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 108, my emphasis). That same worker would receive part of the social production without it acquiring the social form of independent products ready for exchange, but only *in the end* they would be particular products for consumption. Thus, the product "does not have to be first converted into a particular form to acquire a general character for the individual" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 108).

The worker would immediately contribute to global social work and the mercantile mediation would collapse.

The matter refers to a radical change at the level of the division of labour. Marx points out that, instead of it,

> which necessarily arises from the exchange of exchange values, labour would be organised in such a way that the individual's share in common consumption would directly follow. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 108)

In the terms we have specified, this "organization of labour" in a communist society would be a "non-natural" or "human" division of labour. The communal character of production appears, then, as the immediate and transparent determinacy of the society-nature metabolism. In that sense, the issue goes beyond the "technical" terms in which production is organized, whether by promoting the possibility of multilateral activity by producers, or by limiting it to the logic of vital dissection and the fixed roles inherited from capitalist industrial machinism.

In the first instance, it concerns the *social division of labour* and its relation to consumption through distribution, but it no longer involves circulation as a split level, which supposes communal property of the means of production. A second issue is the configuration of the *technical division of labour*. That is, whether the productive practice of the worker who participates in this communal property would be in the mode of his deployment as a particular subject who produces omnilaterally; or if, on the contrary, the miseries of machanism or of the forms of labour organization that, subject to capital, fall into the hands of homogenization and the compulsive need for the accumulation of values would be maintained. On the basis of that first consideration (regarding the immediate and transparent character with which the sociality of production would be asserted in a communist society) the terms in which the technical organization of the productive activity would be carried out as a human or de-alienated activity can be considered later.[1]

[1] Let us note that the problem this leaves us with is that of the alienation that *could still be expected* in the domain of productive activity (*technical* division of labour), even if it does not take the social form of commodity-capitalist alienation (*social* division of labour). To address this is, without a doubt, decisive for such an activity to be meaningful for personal self-realization.

According to our proposal, the social division of labour—which includes the domain of its technical determinations—constitutes *a more fundamental perspective than that of social classes* in Marx's philosophy of history. The issue is decisive for thinking the communist scene we have in hand. To deal here with the division of labour implies going beyond the sublation of commodity-capitalist homogenizations in order to deal with the sublation of the conditions of exclusion that have been reproduced since the beginning of "natural history" in relation to that division: for example, in the contraposition between manual and intellectual labour, consummated in the division between countryside and town.

In the scenario established by capitalist relations of production, the ancestral separation between manual and intellectual labour fixes the latter in the capitalist market as that which concentrates greater value or, more precisely, whose labour power is capable of generating more value.[2] Concerning the situation of intellectual labour in contemporary capitalism, Bates has argued that it faces a process of erosion and precarization where the condition of intellectual workers is no longer so far removed from that of the manual worker that Marx typically characterized as proletarian in the nineteenth century (cf. 2007). The differences, however, are still very significant. In any case, intellectual labour—which generates more value in a capitalist society and, because of this, provides those who perform it with better living conditions—would cease to be the exclusive patrimony of a particular social sector in a communist society. No social sector would hold a position in the class structure of society that would assure it the exclusive privilege of exercising intellectual activity.

In this way, one would finally confront this dissociation that precedes the history of capitalism and whereby the division of labour is established in "natural history." By virtue of this division, those individuals involved in intellectual labour can know an individual freedom impossible for those who are condemned to reproduce their existence from manual labour. The separation between manual and intellectual labour implies structures of domination and exclusion—as well as civilizational bets and broad valuations—that allow some *to do less* of the activity necessary for reproducing their physical existence. Such an activity, at the same time, allows them to have *more resources* (temporal, social, technical, symbolic) to enjoy their existence. Under the logic of capital, this dissociation finds in the law

[2] In *Capital*, Marx states it terms of the difference between "simple labour" and "simple labour intensified" or "multiplied simple labour" (cf. *Capital I*, p. 54).

of value the active mediation that both equates the products of labour and makes it possible for the asymmetry between manual and intellectual labour to be increasingly reproduced. The singular interrelation between production and circulation in capitalist society makes invisible, by means of the law of value, the different capacities from which social subjects participate of the rule of equalization of productive efforts that this interrelation establishes. By virtue of this social structure, and over successive generations, intellectual workers develop a greater capacity and a greater freedom than manual workers.

It must be specified, though, that the alternative of communism represents in Marx something different from the eagerness to "make equivalent" manual labour and intellectual labour. The bet is, rather, to sublate the dissociation itself and arrive at a "human division" of labour that can put aside the separation between "the manual" and "the intellectual" as fixed regions for productive activity to which the activity of each particular subject is bound. The point is not that "everyone does everything," but that the personality of individuals can contribute to the common from the vast dispositions, capacities and needs, that constitute it. It would be, then, a *determined negation* and not an *absolute* one of the division of labour we have already known in class societies. Capitalism has allowed the sublation of the roles assigned in the distribution of activities within the framework of the "natural division" of labour in traditional societies. Instead, it has established the freedom of labour power to sell itself to the highest bidder and has thus revolutionized human exchanges, intensifying and enriching them from the viewpoint of the social resources that can now be integrated to realize the vastest purposes. In turn, the M-C-M' pattern and the social relations that stem from it have meant the resolute negation of particular subjects and their personality. Such a negation results from their maxims of homogenization and subjection to social powers that have taken the form of immeasurable material powers in the world market (*The German Ideology*, p. 78 passim, in Marx & Engels, 1976b).

The next step in the Marxian perspective toward the reconciliation between the particular and the common is the sublation of these roles. It does not matter whether they are ascribed or acquired, whether they respond to a substantial estate belonging or to capitalist property and the fortuity of the market where it finds its mediation (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 78). Such a step would suppose that the specialization requirements of the division of labour can viabilize the contribution of the

particular subject to the common as movable positions according to the different existing capacities and needs.

The principle of different right (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87, in Marx, 1989)—which we analyzed in our Chapter 2 regarding the affirmation of the differences in Marxian communism—outlines the horizon of reflection we are dealing with here and presents us with a complex chain. On the one hand, it establishes an irreplaceable contribution from our own capacities compatible with the satisfaction of our own needs; a contribution that even involves a redefinition of the very notion of *individual need*. It can no longer be simply that need whose satisfaction allows the manual and spiritual reproduction of the producer and his family for the aims of accumulation—as it is established in the wages of proletarianized producers who sell their labour power to capital. Now it would have to involve the properly *personal* need, which is not limited to the rigors of subsistence set by capitalist reproduction.

In Rockmore's terms, the Marxian project of a communist society rests on a practical philosophy at the marrow of which is the idea of full human realization (cf. Rockmore, 2018, p. 62 ff.). Marx's very bet for freedom rests on this idea. In this way, the articulation of capacities and needs would be set in motion in the transformative human activity by which the social requirements of subsistence and personal realization are satisfied as a whole, at the same time that human faculties are poured into Nature. Axel Honneth's contemporary reception emphasizes the social character of this human capacity to meet the various human needs, not only in the sense that they are socially forged needs but that they are satisfied by concerted social action (cf. Honneth, 2017, p. 18).

In attention to the continuum *social/technical division* of labour referred to a moment ago, the following requirement is posed: that the deployment of capacities and the social demand for their delivery on the part of the individuals do not constitute a denial of the freedom of the particular subject. In other words, that the satisfaction of vast and expanding human needs does not reproduce, in a new variety, the forms of misery and damnation under which labour has been placed in the course of "natural history" (cf. *Capital I*, pp. 489–491). In terms of the logic of capital, the problematic articulation of human capacities and needs that summons us is achieved by the highly rationalized organization of labour power aimed at obtaining surplus value and increasing the rate of profit. This logic also presupposes the negation of the personality of the producers, as well as the viabilization of their physical and

spiritual reproduction by means of "necessary labour." It is, then, a logic disposed to generate accumulation of values which, in a progressively smaller proportion, allow the physical reproduction of the owners of capital. In this way, and in a progressively greater proportion, these values make possible the increase of productive power and of the productivity of labour; all this thanks to "surplus labour." Thus, the surplus over and above immediate physical needs results in technological investment, infrastructure, and other requirements of the society of capital, including the unproductive consumption of the owners of the means of production.

In a communist society, the question would be posed in constantly renewed terms, which would be far more complex than in a capitalist society: How could the deployment of human capacities offer, as a *practice of personal self-realization*, the products required for the satisfaction of individual, collective, and communal needs, those of the domain of mere subsistence and those that transcend this domain?[3]

It does not seem possible to address this question outside some conscious *design* that allows the peculiar associative and free control intended here. Throughout his work, and in a perfect Hegelian vein, freedom in association supposes for Marx the *conscious association that manages its own social powers according to a common will*. Capitalist society has already advanced toward the high rationalization of productive processes at the organizational level in its productive units: the systematization of its contracting, operative, accounting, financial processes, and a long etcetera. that includes corporate planning margins for participation in the markets (cf. Bastani, 2019, p. 226 ff.).

But this rationalization has as its symbiotic counterpart the irrationality of commodity exchange and the world market. At the point of the realization of surplus value, the forecasts of the capitalist meet uncertainty and install themselves in it. Conscious designs thus operate at a level that produces prodigies and permanent innovations which coexist with the squandering of their products and the neglect of human needs. The

[3] From the approach of "experimental pluralism" (cf. Jaeggi, 2018, Chapter 10), Honneth understands Marxian communism of the government of associated producers as one of the theoretical strategies for carrying out the French revolutionary ideal of social freedom in the economic sphere. The other options are the Smithian model of free market and the "invisible hand," on the one side, and the democratic model of government supervision and regulation by citizens and the formation of the collective will, on the other. For Honneth, neither of these models should be ruled out a priori from the socialist strategy (cf. 2017, pp. 57–59).

priority of accumulating values over satisfying human needs is manifested here once again to outline the logic of capital as a model of social organization that tends to negate itself through its crises of reproduction. Moreover, it seems to subsist precisely by reproducing these crises as an "institutionalized social order" (cf. Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018).

Marx repeatedly celebrates the "prodigies" of capital that result from this structure within the framework of the capitalist world market (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 97–98). As he states throughout his work, a communist society cannot but result from the high rationalization of capitalist production processes and their high productivity. However, the designs of capitalist organization cannot cope with the horizon of "human history" we are dealing with here. That the associated producers become *free to* manage the terms of their life in common supposes much more than the productive maximization provided by capital: it requires abandoning its homogenizing character so that this life in common may be the scenario of self-realization of its protagonists by means of their own reciprocally differentiated personal activity. The producers, then, would cease to remain lost in estranged labour. On the other hand, as consumers, they would no longer be mere passive subjects reproducing a subsistence functional to capital. The mere animality of consumption under capitalist culture is expressed in the *Paris Manuscripts* (in Marx, 1975b) in terms of deprivation and lack (cf. p. 274), as well as of immediacy and unilaterality (cf. pp. 276–277). Under the historical experience of capitalist societies, the *summum* of this negation of social life as personal self-realization is expressed in what, according to these *Manuscripts* (cf. pp. 272–275), constitutes the second aspect of alienated labour: the result by which the subsistence consumption of highly impoverished working populations—with hardly any purchasing margin in the market—is accompanied by a radically alienated productive activity.

The emancipatory expectation would be that our own personal activity be the effective bond with the common (community of free individuals). Through this activity, and under appropriate organizational and societal mediations, individuals would satisfy their needs, both those of their immediate subsistence and those of their specifically human conscious will or of self-realization. This implies consciously formulating and connecting the requirements of production, distribution, and consumption so that the indeterminacy of the market does not mediate between them. This sort of *consciously regulated harmonization* between what each individual

gives and obtains as a cooperant in social production, and their dependence on a certain design of the life in common, raises questions that cannot simply be *put aside for when the time comes to address them*. For the rest, history after Marx has known experiences where attempts were made to design the life in common, and where this was carried out catastrophically for the cause of the human interests in the various forms of "real socialism" (cf. del Aguila & Sotomayor, 2019).[4] The disaster of this experience, specifically for the recognition of personal freedom, has been so overwhelming as to remind us that it is better to face the conceptual challenges of human emancipation here and now: from the historical circumstance in which the horizon of the capitalism we know inscribes us.

For starters, it is worth asking whether the diversity of individualities—which would be radically more cultivated and deployed in communism—is even possible to harmonize. If the plausibility of an affirmative answer—as is the case in Marx—depends on the conscious organization of production and distribution, the question arises: What would be the (ethical, political, technical) nature of this conscious design for the viability of a humanly emancipated life in common?

In our judgment, we encounter here a fundamental limitation in Marx's proposal of communism; a limitation that compromises the very project of a humanly emancipated society where our own productive activity results in the self-realization of individuals who freely participate in the life in common. The limitation is that the Marxian representation of communism does not sublate the dichotomy between "the necessary" and "the free." Specifically, we refer to Marx's thesis that the reduction of necessary labour to take place in communism entails the realization of freedom as a *domain apart* from that of productive necessity. In such a domain, individual realization would be consummated in properly human (and not merely animal) terms. In this way, and in contrast to his reading of "natural history" and his critique of capitalist society, Marx's dialectic seems to get stuck here; it reaches a limit that prevents thinking, for communist society, *human freedom in and from social necessity*.

This dialectical unity has to be thought—we assert—from the relation of mutual constitution and reciprocal spur between personal capacities

[4] It should be noted that, for Poulantzas, the socialist routes in the European twentieth century are not limited to "real socialism" but include social democracy of the welfare State. In both cases, the route of statism would be imposed over popular democratic initiatives (cf. 2000, pp. 251 ff.).

and needs. That is to say, through a reflection on the extent to which the free deployment of individual activity—which takes the social form of the development of capacities—could face the requirements of physical reproduction and of the ensemble of individual and collective needs of individuals members of the community. In our approach, to undertake this reflection leads to assume the necessity of political power for the communist cause.

4.1 The "dualism of Realms"

In the Grundrisse, among Marx's various claims about the elements that would constitute the life in common in a communist society, one is central to the organization of the productive apparatus: the claim that an "economy of time" would subsist beyond the collapse of the law of value that drives exchange in commodity-capitalist societies.

> If we presuppose communal production, the time factor naturally remains essential. The less time society requires to produce corn, livestock, etc., the more time it wins for other production, material or spiritual. As with a single individual, the comprehensiveness of its development, its pleasures and its activities depends upon the saving of time. Ultimately, all economy is a matter of economy of time. … Economy of time, as well as the planned distribution of labour time over the various branches of production, therefore, remains the first economic law if communal production is taken as the basis. It becomes a law even to a much higher degree. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 109)

Faced with the law of value and its homogenizing power, communism's economy of time has to address a—hitherto neglected—personal difference that reaches the sphere of the individual capacities that are deployed in the various branches of production:

> this is essentially different from the measurement of exchange values (of labours or products of labour) by labour time. The labours of individuals in the same branch of industry, and the different types of labour, are not only *quantitatively* but *qualitatively* different. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 109)

If the economy of time remains the fundamental law—even under this reformulation that would outlive the law of value—we may ask: What measure will then govern the organization of the various branches of

production or of the various productive activities within each of them? By means of the law of value, the process is decided in the domain of circulation by means of free competition up to the reciprocally fortuitous correlations of supply and demand; that is to say, it is resolved by means of exchange value and money. But now the pattern is foreign to thelaw of value, which is expressed in the qualitative identity of the different magnitudes of labour: we find that labours become not only quantitatively, but qualitatively distinct. *Abstract labour* has lost the power it used to have. Thus, the labours within and between the different branches of production would be qualitatively and quantitatively different among themselves. It could not be otherwise if productive activity ceases to be subject to fixed forms in order to become a *space of self-realization* sensitive to personal difference. In turn, the deployment of personality with regard to individual and collective needs would only increase this difference: the concrete difference around the goods and services required. The Marxian expectation is that this should occur according to the law that the optimization of labour time is essential to productivity, whatever its design and whatever its expected result.

This complexity in difference is recognized in various ways by several contemporary Marxists and neo-Marxists, but not concretely addressed. For example, we find in Eagleton the analogy between socialism and beauty or the balance of art, on the one side, and between communism and the sublime, on the other (cf. 2010, p. 105). The sublime of communism refers to the sublation of the law of value and its concomitant homogenizations. Thus, it arranges itself as a measure of its own *modus operandi*, which implies "a transformation of the very idea of the commensurable, one which goes beyond the whole artificial (and bourgeois) notion of equality" (2010, p. 105). Furthermore, from the new conditionality of superabundance, a *communist spontaneity* in accordance with Aristotelian *virtue* finds its way in (cf. 2010, pp. 106–107). The problem is thus intuitively delineated; it is now a matter of addressing it conceptually with the aim of its practical management.

The consideration of differences outlines the *communist situation* in relation to labour: (a) it does not generate products confronted against each other in the sphere of circulation, where they must wield—as objects metamorphosed by labour—the portion of the global social labour they represent; (b) each producer contributes a part of the communal production as general wealth, from which particular products will later be derived

for their consumption by means of a particular distribution; (c) the relation between what is contributed according to capacities and what is received according to needs will no longer respond to the law of value, for the abstract equalization of labour and its products would be canceled; and (d) it is still necessary—in fact, more than ever—to potentiate the productivity of labour in order to face an unprecedented deployment of individual needs, which presupposes the *economy of time*.[5]

In turn, the sublation of the division between manual and intellectual labour in Heller, *work* and *labour* in her terminology, offers an interesting point of discussion in favor of equality in communism (cf. 1976, p. 106). If the deployment of the productive forces allows the reduction of necessary labour to a minimum as well as the determination of its content as "simple labour," then the interindividual differences in the disposition toward necessary labour (*work*) become trivialized. Practically anyone could do anything or—directly—*the same*, and for the same period of time, which would result from the greatest possible shortening of the working day. After such a workday, each one would take care of his or her own concerns in his or her "free time" or time for self-realization (*labour*).

Here is a place for equality in the domain of the basic reproduction of the communist society. Nevertheless, this presumes a pattern of homogenization of necessary labour that does not seem to be the form of the high productivity required by communism. There is a number of reasons for claiming this. For starters, because it has ceased to be so in many ways even for capitalism itself. Indeed, capitalism has learned to obtain surplus value from the most varied and flexible forms of organization of production. Likewise, such homogenization could cause renewed negations of the personality in the form of a "communist subjection" of the associated producers to impoverishing forms of "necessary" activity. All the more so when—in deepening the civilizing achievements of capitalism—the management of the common should be disposed toward forms of organization capable of attending to individual, collective, and communal capacities and needs, which would be intertwined in accordance with the pattern turning of labour into personal self-realization. From a contemporary viewpoint, it is not feasible to think human emancipation from the

[5] For a discussion of some of these aspects apropos of their formulation in *The German Ideology*, cf. Furner, (2011, pp. 197 ff.).

mechanical and nineteenth-century representation of necessary labour as homogeneous "unskilled" labour.

The situation thus shaped demands a management that implements this conception of productivity where neither the products, nor the persons, nor the productive activity that links them can be homogenized. The expectation at stake here is that this demand keeps promoting the *highest degree of performance* in the production and distribution of products. With respect to the productive activity itself, the satisfaction of certain massive social needs requiring universal attention from the associated producers could lead, under specific circumstances, to certain monochord technical activities or to the exercise of *the same* mechanical skills and their universal generalization. The *fetish of the singular* would not replace here the negation of personality known in "natural history." The basic needs for the reproduction of the life in common could surely be satisfied with *the same* routine processes in certain productive contexts, which can be viabilized by the universal development of *the same* capacities for certain technical activities. This, at least, as long as such needs are not redefined in the course of time and according to their different spatial contexts. Such a mode of productive activity, however, cannot be the dominant pattern or the *telos* of this new management of the common, but it should be the exception. In a community of free and (mutually) different individuals who know the rich cultivation of their personality, the predominance of labour as a routine activity and an alienating technical process would bring us back to the situation, characteristic of capitalism, where "labour is shunned like the plague" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 274). It would be, no doubt, a disservice to the communist expectation of promoting the highest degree of productivity associated with the creative deployment of human potentials along the lines of labour as self-realization.

The determination of the most efficient, of course, would no longer respond to the miserable "more is better" that in capitalism abstractly equalizes it all under a sort of compulsive delirium that plots against itself in its systemic crises of reproduction. It would respond, instead, to the maximum harvesting of the concrete capacities of associated labour for the best satisfaction of the also concrete needs of persons. In this way, both the logic of equality and that of *more* and *less* would cease to be the dominant abstraction and would become subject to the determinations, situations, and specific requirements of production and consumption. This would imply the cultivation of the personality of the associated

producers, who are rich in capacities and needs, and the promotion of a non-fetishistic economic science, which would no longer respond to the practical-abstract forms of capitalist society.

The concept and practice of *productivity* would thus abandon the formality and void that was proper to it—when they were decided in conformity with the logic of capital—to *place themselves in* the concrete. Nothing, consequently, could be estimated as *more or less productive* per se. It is not intended that the criteria of efficacy and efficiency bequeathed to humanity by capital disappear (neither in the jurist, nor in the artist, nor in the person of science, nor in any other). Rather, these criteria should be reshaped for satisfying the expanding human needs from the collective appropriation of the productive forces. All this, in the line of promoting the self-realization of the personality of the associated producers.

Thus, the perspective of *optimization* continues to dominate: the typically modern drive for growth and progress, in principle *without limit*, even if it is no longer a "more is better" in terms of the logic of capital. From this we may draw a line of criticism against maintaining humanized labour (i.e., labour in the control of freely associated producers) in the logic of *highest returns*. But this would already be something more than a critique of the Marxian sense of *progress*, to be a criticism of the civilizing premises of the Modern Age. One may also discuss this matter from other possible matrices of civilizing reproduction. For example, from a traditional culture of *sufficiency*, or from the perspective of *sustainability* with which the disproportion in which the West has related to Nature in recent centuries is contemporarily confronted. Such critical paths are not our interest here. From Marx's horizon, Eagleton poses it in terms of the paradoxical circumstance that communism would rest as much on the abundance of the productive forces developed under capitalism, as it would have to inherit the cultural habits of its pathological productivism (cf. 2010, p. 97). While in capitalist society this is experienced spontaneously without further problematization, in communist society it would have to be problematized due to the priority of self-realization over the time dedicated to necessary labour. This requires consciously taking charge of our relationship with Nature—as an ontological condition of all the possibilities of realization of our "species-being"—that results from the social form in which production is organized. For the logic of capital, these considerations about Nature can only be *accidental* from the viewpoint of its systemic conformation and reproduction.

The third book of *Capital* offers perhaps the passage in which Marx most emblematically addresses the issue of the social and material conditions that would allow the associated individuals in a communist society to have a *life in freedom*. We allow ourselves to quote this passage at length, since its careful analysis is crucial to our argument.

> In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilised man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite. (*Capital III*, p. 807, in Marx, 1998)

Thus, *two* realms are proposed: the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom." The first one appears as *condition of* the second one. In this sense, the first one, where the productive forces are put into play, has to be perfectly fulfilled or terminated so that the second one can make its appearance. A nitid, discreet frontier is established between the two. The second, the "realm of freedom" where human forces operate, cannot give place to itself: it is substitute, dependent. Once it appears, it is an "end in itself," but with a peculiar *autonomy*: it cannot guarantee its own existence. In order to be, it requires something radically other, where "actual material production" resides.

First, it should be noted that the time devoted to the "realm of necessity" is different from the labour time required under the capitalist mode of production. It is "determined by necessity" in the sense of "the requirements of subsistence" that would no longer depend on the needs

of self-valorization of capital which carries its own sense of "the necessary" for the life of workers. At the same time, it presupposes "mundane considerations," a general reference to the natural conditions that allow the satisfaction of subsistence needs; a reference that, by the way, no longer involves subjection to the alienating pattern of capitalist private property. This "realm of necessity," however, no longer operates as a blind force for the individuals. Rather, it is subject to their conscious will, now made effective reality or transformative activity. Hence, it is feasible for the associated individuals to be in charge of it "with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature."

Humanity thus rises above its animal condition. But animality can never be abandoned, for ours is an animal species: time and again, regardless of the mode of production from which he deploys his activity, man "must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants." Material need constitutes us and cannot be abandoned or set aside. Marx is particularly clear about the immediately natural determination of our human condition in the *Paris Manuscripts*. While alienated labour would condemn us to the unilaterality of animals, this dimension cannot simply be abandoned or set aside, but is the original condition of our species: "*Man* is directly a *natural being*" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 336). Putting things in this way, everything seems to be played out around a specific and highly determined condition: "the shortening of the working day." Here is established the frontier between the necessary and the free, between the animal and the properly human.

We want to discuss this representation of communism from the dialectic of needs and capacities that traverses Marx's work, but which—in our opinion—this "dualism of realms" leaves—in our opinion—aside. A first representation of the relation between needs and capacities can be given in terms of the development of the latter being a condition for the satisfaction of the former, regardless of their type. Marx points out that needs are expanded throughout history, but that they can continue to be satisfied by the equally progressive deployment of capacities. However, the dialectic here looming, or the *relation* that would make this possible, is yet to be formulated.

In the representation under discussion, capacities engender productive forces that represent the human activity disposed to deal with and resolve our deficiencies as sentient beings dependent on other objects to reproduce our existences. With the pairs activity/passivity and capacity/need

one is supposed to answer how free individual life is possible in and from the community in a communist society. Well then, two questions beset us: (a) Once the end of "natural history" has been consummated and social subjections external to productive activity have been liquidated, can we continue to manage a sense of *the necessary* submitted to the horizon of subsistence and animality? (b) How can the dualism of realms that is thus proposed be effective and function in a communist society of free and (mutually) different individuals?

To attempt to answer these questions, we must consider what might be "beyond material production properly so called." According to our quotation, it would have to be that activity which not only goes beyond mere physical subsistence, but which is not directly patterned by the relationship with the natural environment and by its subjection to it. Does this relationship with the environment change when the artist paints or, better, when the free time of a given individuality makes it possible for his creative disposition to be realized in the form of the activity of painting? Is not the creative activity one that has to face the materiality of its environment and the demands that come from it by virtue of the object and the means of its realization?

One could always allude, of course, to "the actual," but we consider that there is more than nuance at stake here. Freedom "in the materialistic sense" (cf. della Volpe, 1977) could only be a deployment of objectifying conscious activity; an activity that is capable of confronting the requirements of the "external legality" in order to assert itself in the environment to which it belongs, i.e., Nature.[6] In this way, the fixation of "the free" by contraposition and denigration of "the necessary" would seem to be an *idealized view of what human activity could become* once it is no longer submitted to the misery of social classes and the private appropriation of the surpluses produced. We would thus lose the path of a dialectical reading proper of the living and relational dynamisms in which any activity of our species as a natural species is inserted. It would give way, rather, to the shape of freedom as "man's innate property, an eternal attribute that opposes necessity" (Garaudy, 1971, p. 184).

In the closing of the fragment we are analyzing, the medullar role of the shortening of the working day is affirmed by sentencing this shape of denigration with which humanity is offered the alternative of finally

[6] For a treatment of this question in Marx's early work, cf. Leopold (2007, pp. 244 ff.).

leaving necessary labour behind. Even when it is a work performed "with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, [our] human nature," we would always be ready to escape from it: "Beyond it [the realm of necessity] begins … the true realm of freedom" (*Capital III*, p. 807). As long as this escape is successful, the working day is shortened and, with it, one level decreases, that of necessity, and the other increases, that of freedom. The polemical reception of this issue has undoubtedly been extensive throughout the twentieth century. While Fromm favored the "humanization of work" (cf. 1976, 1955, Chapter 8), Mandel supported the dualism of realms because, according to him, expelling the rigors of mechanical labour from the "realm of necessity" would take us back to handcraft production (1971, p. 112). The latter is the logic of *faits accomplis*; of facts, by the way, preceding the recent revolutions of productive forces in the development of capitalism in the last fifty years.

In any case, the circumstance is—to say the least—paradoxical, Marx being the promoter of this escape from the "realm of necessity." On the one hand, this formulation leaves us in the same fundamental conditions that made us deal with necessary labour under "natural history," which brings us back to the Marxian characterization of "labour like the plague" or as the alienation of human activity itself in bourgeois society (cf. *Paris Manuscripts*, p. 274). Indeed, even if it is a plague that we consciously decide and choose, a plague whose harmfulness we attenuate, it is still a plague. On the other hand, this formulation also presents a concept of necessity that embellishes and idealizes, in contrast, the *authentically human* activity; as if, for example, providing food or shelter was a second order activity that "is not *properly* ours." It would be a matter, then, of working the least time possible, quickly and urgently in order to finally have *most of the day free*. The expression "being free of/from," so dear to liberalism, resounds here with great force; it is a question of getting rid of the necessity instead of recreating and realizing oneself in it. Whatever happened to the bet for labour as self-realization? Let us not forget that this bet was not only a motive for Marx's pioneering denunciation of alienated labour in the *Paris Manuscripts*, but also a *leitmotif* for his more radical emancipatory bets.

We know that Marx's work largely rejects the biblical representation of labour as a damnation and proposes instead to regard the transformative activity of Nature—and the effort it demands—as self-realization:

> Certainly, the volume of labour itself appears to be externally determined by the aim to be attained and the obstacles to its attainment which have to be overcome by labour. But equally A. Smith has no inkling that the *overcoming of these obstacles* is in itself a manifestation of freedom—and, moreover, that the external aims are ⟨thereby⟩ stripped of their character as merely external natural necessity, and become posited as aims which only the individual himself posits, that *they are therefore posited as self-realisation*, objectification of the subject, and thus real freedom, whose action is precisely work. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 530, my emphasis)

However, the dualism of realms brings us back to the characterization of labour as a plague and to the consequent need to flee from it. It brings us back to this old Adamic condemnation that not even communism could solve: a natural fact for all productive circumstances. In contemporary culture of consumption, such a condemnation is manifested in its insistence that the meaning of our individual realization be established *outside labour*, in shopping, vacations, and in all the varieties in which we can be "free as animals":

> As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be [a mere] animal. (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 274)

Admittedly, in the dualism of realms, the "being free of/from" has at its purpose an activity of self-realization and not the mere passivity of consumption (cf. Eagleton, 2011, p. 75). Nevertheless, the dualistic disdain against "the necessary"—and the activity it requires to be satisfied—brings us back to the tradition that enthusiastically represents freedom as some kind of indeterminacy and abandonment of our factual constraints. It is a risky route rather than a promising one for the formulation of emancipatory interests that aim to sublate the logic of capital. Faced with this indeterminacy of "the free" in Marxian communism, capitalism as we know it offers very precise guidelines for situating individual freedom—animalized to whatever extent—according to its needs of accumulation: broad and *sufficiently* sustainable reproduction of labour power, systemic needs of unproductive consumption, etc.

In order to advance in the determination of the issue, we may ask: Do the human forces deployed in the "realm of freedom" (where what is

distinctive of our species would be at play) contribute to the joint reproduction of this model of life in common?[7] Or would they be a mere "unproductive" moment—in terms of the development of productive forces—that would have nothing to do with the movement of joint reproduction of communist society, including its subsistence needs? In other words, something like a moment of indeterminacy that "neither owes nor offers anything to anyone" or that, in any case, does not acknowledge receipt of its conditions of possibility. With this, it also distances itself from the possibility of contributing—according to voluntary design and conscious planning—to its own conditions of realization: to the conditions of realization of personal freedom which are situated in the "realm of necessity."

In this way, we are presented with the social relation between productive time and unproductive time. Under the logic of capital, unproductive was that time which did not generate surplus value (surplus labour) or which did not permit the reproduction of labour power (necessary labour). The properly unproductive time would thus be placed at the moment of individual consumption of the owners of capital, of the proletariat, and of all those who do not produce value by means of their activity. In Marx's dualism of realms, the production required for the opening of the "realm of freedom" would have been already satisfied. And yet it remains to be defined whether or not the time spent in the activity proper to this realm would be productive in terms of its contribution to the "realm of necessity" that made it possible. To begin with, from the perspective of self-realization and its distance from the immediate conditionality of subsistence, it is plausible that the most outstanding achievements of our species result from this realm. This could be applied in favor of the highest degree of productivity, that of a species that contributes to itself from the greatest singular realizations and productions of its individual members. In Heller's terms, human activity would be determined as *labour* that returns to *work* as a "social duty" (Heller, 1976, p. 106). The issue, however, remains untouched by Marx.

Within the framework of the parody of Stirner's statements in *The German Ideology*, the issue is expressed in the following terms:

[7] Note that, in the quotation referring to the dualism of realms we are analyzing, Marx reserves the expression "human energy" (which may also be translated as "human forces") to refer to those productive forces proper to the "realm of freedom.".

> [Sancho] imagines that the so-called organisers of labour [the communists] wanted to organise the entire activity of each individual, and yet it is precisely they who distinguish between directly productive labour, which has to be organised, and labour which is not directly productive. In regard to the latter, however, it was not their view, as Sancho imagines, that each should do the work of Raphael, but that anyone in whom there is a potential Raphael should be able to develop without hindrance. (*The German Ideology*, p. 393)

Here it is established that, while certain organizational guidelines are maintained in the domain of "directly productive labour," a spontaneity ruled by the uniqueness of each individual is to prevail in *the strictly free domain*. The interrelationship between both instances as reciprocal spurs is of no interest, except in the sense of the productive requirements so that each can develop his or her "potential Raphael"; where this "potential Rafael" would be "the free," and those "productive requirements" would be "the necessary." But the return of "the free" on its necessary conditions lacks concept and the dialectic of this relation is not consummated. Thus, for example, no thought is given to the extent to which satisfying a need for self-realization ("being Rafael") can revert—through the development of the capacities that this satisfaction involves—on the needs of individual, collective, and communal subsistence that make such self-realization feasible. Under this silence, the management of the common does not take advantage of all that is available for its reproduction and would not take conscious charge of the wealth it is capable of generating; it does not design the appropriation of the products of the free activity for serving the requirements of subsistence.

The issue becomes more problematic, to the point of generally incapacitating the proposal, if we pay attention to the mechanical approach in the dualism of realms: there, where one realm increases and the other decreases. Well then, how is it that the expansion of needs can include the isomorphic *parallel*—not intersected, since such an intersection is here a great void—deployment of capacities, so that one realm can be reduced and the other can grow? Here arises the critical-propositional question of confronting the reciprocal feedback and redefinition—no longer in strictly quantitative terms (expansion/reduction), but in qualitative ones—of both aspects of the human condition in a communist society: *How is the relation of mutual determination between needs and capacities resolved?*

This dualism between "realm of necessity" and "realm of freedom" and its mechanical approach obscure the dialectic between human capacities and needs that we must address to think the emancipated society Marx called "communism." At this point we postulate that, if the historical conditions for considering the development of the productive forces as an *end in itself* (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 463–464) were to be produced, this would mean the *sublation of the dualistic contrapositions* that had restricted such a development in the modes of production proper to "natural history," contrapositions that knew their paroxysm under the logic of capital. In other words, it would mean the sublation of those class structures that reserved for some the constraints of "the necessary" whereas others enjoyed the deployment of "the free."

In the communist society that concerns us, the radical deployment of needs and capacities would have been consummated as a result of the universal exchange set as a systemic necessity of capital. Without intending it, this form of social organization would have given birth to a productive force capable of determining itself as self-movement of its own becoming (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 411–412). That is, to a society that no longer has to be related to the preconditions of its activity as a foreignness that escapes its control, but that now takes charge of them, voluntarily and consciously. Thus, its activity is the immanent development made transparent to society itself once sublated the class distinctions between dominators and dominated, between possessors of freedom and those excluded from it.

In order for this society to sustain itself, the freedom of individuals must be conceived as the human self-movement by which the persons who constitute it can satisfy all their *necessity*. Be it the needs that arise from the permanent lacks that result from their species-*specific* condition, or the necessity defined as a disposition to self-realization, where the creative potentials of their *specific singularity* (of species) can be embodied in Nature or in life in common itself. To consummate this *real autonomy*, freedom would have to consciously reproduce its own conditions of reproduction; that is, to integrally take care of itself instead of *abandoning part of itself*—that is, the "lower" needs of subsistence—along the way.

According to this Marxian dualism of realms, freedom begins "beyond" necessity. Under the ontologically monistic demand we propose—in our view, consistent with Marx's dialectical critique—not only necessity is required by freedom, but also, conversely, necessity requires freedom. And in this dialectic are decided the fortunes of a

humanly emancipated community such as the one Marx himself envisioned. It is a demand for radicality in a Marxian vein, for it seeks to root freedom in "man himself," including his materiality and animality, and, fundamentally, in his social relations and their necessity. It does not settle for a new variety of the discourse of *higher causes*—identified with certain dimensions of our activity—but departs from humanity as the producer of its own *practical totality*.

That being said, let us now focus on the connection between personal freedom and the development of human capacities. With respect to the former, we have already seen that Marx refers to "free time" as "available time" detached from the activity that merely reproduces existence. Nevertheless, the relation between this "free time" and "necessary time" remains to be examined. Concretely, Marx takes for granted, but does not explain, what would be the spur to the development of the productive forces in communism, that which would make possible the increase of "available time." In capitalism, the spur that potentiates capacities and satisfies needs is the logic of capital, general competition and class struggle. By not addressing this issue for the case of a communist society, Marx falls into a materialism that disavows itself. A progressively indeterminate freedom is praised which no longer knows the negativity of its finite conditions of realization. In this way, a form of society is represented whose conditions of material reproduction are uncertain.

In the limit, one could imagine—as scientific fiction has done on more than one occasion—a civilization that has achieved absolute *freedom from* necessary labour, where all its time would be "free time."[8] It could be imagined as a civilization with a sophisticated technical system capable of satisfying all survival needs and of providing all the requirements for its members to take care exclusively of their own creative interests—in which their uniqueness would lie. The past generations of such a civilization would have created this very powerful system of engineering and resource allocation. But that would already be part of some sort of mythical origin progressively forgotten in the history of successive generations perfectly emancipated from any productive activity that responds to "some external purpose," be it social or natural. We could imagine that this technical device, fully compliant, would even have self-diagnostic and self-repair systems. Thus, the members of this civilization would lightly

[8] See, for example, the episode "When the Bough Breaks" from the First Season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (cf. Shearer & Manners, 1988).

occupy themselves with their free and self-referred creations, without any need to deal with the coarse materiality metamorphosed by spontaneous machines or with supervising their performance.

This techno-arcadia would know its collapse when the "external necessity" bursts in through some unforeseen phenomenon, such as an alien invasion, a natural disaster or any unpredictable system failure. Its outcome could not be more undesirable. Machines would cease to achieve their preset ends and nothing could be done about it. It could not be otherwise, for our species would have become incapable of dealing with that gross and invisible dimension of its existence: that which corresponds to the conditions of its physical subsistence. In reality, its members would have crippled themselves in the process of accessing a life of unconditioned freedom. In this process, they lost their technical skills and competencies, as they no longer required them. Thus, it would not be possible for them to face any anomalous circumstance that would seriously affect their technical *set up*. They would have become incapable of repairing their machines in the event that these could not repair themselves, or of producing other machines to face a crisis of social reproduction resulting from the irruption of the "external necessity." To a large extent, they would have become incapable of securing the conditions of reproduction for their way of life.

The human capacities deployed to the highest degree through the development of the productive forces—in a mode of production such as the one we are considering here—should be capable of satisfying the vastest needs. Nevertheless, as human forces, they carry with them a finitude that will not cease to be effective in the most diverse ways—and with no need to write science fiction about it—just because we stop thinking it. Not to think the organic continuity and the dialectic of the total process whereby the expanding needs of personal realization can be satisfied—hand in hand with the growing development of the productive forces that satisfy the needs of subsistence—within the framework of a given social and natural circumstance is to surrender oneself to indeterminacy and to cripple oneself. Specifically, the question here posed stands even before the most perfect machines: How does the development of human capacities, expressed in the form of flourishing post-capitalist human forces, relate to the satisfaction of expanding needs? Precisely in terms of the activity and disposition of these human forces, could each particular subject be expected to give his or her best to the common, which was put into play in the "realm of necessity," when his or her "true self" lies in the

"realm of freedom"? This is an absolutely crucial point (cf. Iacono, 2019). The material conditions of reproduction for personal freedom—that is, the reproduction of subsistence needs—will not be solved by themselves. They require a certain "necessary labour" and a certain quality of it. Well then, how to solve this question if everyone will prefer to give their best to the "realm of freedom," the only realm where they could achieve their self-realization?

Faced with the void where this dualism places us, we can momentarily cede the floor to the good liberal and his regular concerns for the welfare of individuals. We can infer his position on the dualism of realms, for example, when he explains the failures of state interventionism—in contemporary capitalist societies—by alluding to the pointlessness of toiling as a worker in a state enterprise. Why should an individual give the best of his efforts and care where he does not find a result he can deem "his own"? Despite the fact that, for our liberal, everything results in the monadological sacralization of the private property of the means of production, his point is established: the satisfaction of the particular subject. And he would surely, and stubbornly, return to Marx's communism here under discussion: Should the individual devote efforts and care to the "realm of necessity" for the sake of the common welfare that will mediate the expansion of his consumption in "available time"? Surely, he would interpret such a possibility as a case of failed or inefficient allocation of individual efforts. What if, as befits "human nature," he better takes care of his own well-being, enjoying and giving his best in the "realm of freedom," rather than in that space of backwardness and self-negation called the "realm of necessity"?

From the anthropological condition—postulated by Marx himself—that man is a subject of needs and interests and not the acolyte of some well-meaning parish, we would have to agree with the good liberal. Indeed, it would not make much sense from the viewpoint of his mere individuality; not while the dialectic and the co-dependence between the satisfaction of the particular subject and communal welfare remains not determined. For the rest, if such a determination is not achieved, the result will be predictable: unproductiveness.

The possibility of sublating the irrationalities of the capitalist market cannot be left undetermined. To what extent can the management of common efforts dispense with the mediation of the circulation of commodities—where persons are economically *forced* to deliver the best

of themselves—to shape a free activity where individuals become self-realized? So far, mercantile competition has organized human efforts with results unprecedented in social history in terms of the productivity achieved. The *Communist Manifesto* offers this recognition in emblematic terms (cf. pp. 156 ff., in Marx & Engels, 1976a). What is then the communist alternative to what our economists call "incentives"? Why would the freely associated producer still be willing to deliver his best in his productive activity for the satisfaction of the demands of the "realm of necessity"? There would no longer be a market that "reinforces" or "punishes"—the behaviorist tone is not ours, but that of the dominant economic discourse—according to the efficiency or inefficiency resulting from his participation in the *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Moreover, why should the producer strive for greater efficiency in such a delivery if he would participate in a society where certain "social benefits" would be assured to him *by default* in the "realm of necessity"? That is, in what post-capitalist form of social organization would human capacities continue to increasingly strive and deploy themselves according to criteria to be redefined in terms of innovation, efficiency, sustainability, etc.? The emancipatory discourse has this *pending agenda*. The logic of capital, on the other hand, has things very clear here according to its M-C-M' pattern. It does not seem, however, that the abundance of technique will solve the question without further ado. This is, to say the least, an optimism that does not problematize precisely what needs to be thought through: the social relations of production and distribution in communism.

This optimism overflows in the formulation of the dualism of realms. Its *utopianism* is manifested in its refusal to give conceptual form to the communist challenge of constantly increasing productivity. In our judgment, neither new nor renewed "realms" reproducing the scansions already known in "natural history" would be necessary. Rather, what is required is a radical human gaze expressed in personal belonging to the common. By virtue of this belonging, not only is the unity in the common affirmed, but also the particular realizations become an effective counterpoint to the movement that produces the well-being of the community; a well-being holistically conceived as an articulation of survival and self-realization. According to this perspective, to determine the spur for the development of the productive forces of a communist society involves redefining the relation between the satisfaction of needs and the development of capacities. Our orientation, hence, is that of going beyond

this dualism of realms where "available time," in which we would deploy the creative dispositions of our personality, is confronted with "necessary time" for the social reproduction of subsistence.[9]

Apropos of the creative dispositions of the personality, Agnes Heller refers to the space of satisfaction of the "radical needs" (cf. Heller, 1976, Chapter 4). Our interpretation assumes no dissociation, although it does make a distinction, between material needs of reproduction and "radical needs." These needs would be determined in the historical continuum from which our social relations of production allow us to expand our capacities and horizons of total satisfaction of individual, collective, and communal requirements. They would not proceed, then, outside of what we do with our most elementary needs, but according to the social possibilities and limits from which we deal with them. In the same way, the satisfaction of subsistence needs poses mutable requirements that refer to the redefinitions of the life in common decided by the deployment and satisfaction of the "radical needs."

Under this approach, "radical needs" are presented to us as such according to historically determined *social presuppositions* from which we satisfy our immediate material needs for reproduction. Returning to science fiction topics, the "radical need" to explore space driven by the desire to know the universe may involve the social redefinition of what we understand by "subsistence needs." If that disposition toward space exploration ends up generating a civilization that colonizes and permanently inhabits outer space regions without atmosphere, this could bring about drastic social mutations and adaptations to provide us with breathing conditions. For example, by means of biotechnology that would allow us to synthesize oxygen without having to breathe it in the environment, or via a physiological reorganization that would allow us directly to no longer need oxygen, etc. Subsistence needs are not static and their relationship with "radical needs" inter-retroactively affects their contents and their known margins. As far as we have been able to see, neither does Heller work toward a totalizing conception of the dialectic between necessity and freedom proper to a communist society.

By going beyond this dualism of realms, freedom would not be affirmed with respect to a non-free dimension with which it would

[9] Regarding *free time* as a higher and more fundamental measure than *labour time* in an economy arranged for individual realization and the consideration of a properly human wealth, cf. Booth (1991).

share some sort of *parallel life*; that is, the time of necessary labour. Rather, the capacity provided by the freely associated producers—in the form of an activity transformative of Nature for the satisfaction of the whole their needs—would in itself be deployment and cultivation of personal richness; that is, a path to self-realization.[10] We could use as an example the case of free software developers, who can fulfill their vocation through their creative activity. They give humanity the possibility of exchanging information in the cyberspace, which can be used, for instance, to improve food distribution in a refugee camp or to improve the quality of our pictures. All this, without money or private property—directly—mediating in the exchange that particular subjects make of this knowledge.[11]

Freedom, then, would end up meeting again with necessity: both with that which is bastardized by our inveterate metaphysical tradition—necessity which responds to our animality and to the communal requirements of our subsistence—and with that of deploying the distinctive creative dispositions of our species. In this way, the free deployment of human capacities would become self-realization by means of the transforming activity itself, which in turn would revert to the needs of subsistence and then back to those of self-realization. A dialectic of progressive self-transformation for our species would be at stake. Here, the stimulus to the greater and better delivery of our own ever-growing capacities would involve the realization of particular subjects in terms of their own *immanent deployment*, which would have to be *managed by the society of freely associated producers*.

We propose, then, a *link* for the dialectic between needs and capacities derivable from a Marxian representation of communism that does not presuppose a dualism of realms.[12] The moments that make up such a link

[10] In a convergent approach, although from a moderate critique of capitalism as a mode of production, Honneth puts it as follows: "The society of the future should no longer be conceived of as an order steered centrally from below, i.e. from within the relations of production, but as an organic whole of independent and yet purposefully cooperating functions in which the members act for each other in social freedom" (2017, p. 93).

[11] By the way, there is a growing academic literature on the relationship between the development of the digital world and the communist cause (cf. Barbrook, 2000; Cockshott & Nieto, 2017; Srnicek, 2016).

[12] Cf., among other places, the reference already quoted from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, where it is expected that "the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual" (p. 87).

would feedback and promote each other. Through its processes of scientific discovery, technological innovation, organizational management, and cultivation of individuality in their broadest dimensions, the development of capacity would contribute to the requirements of subsistence and self-realization. Likewise, only from the satisfaction of these requirements could we conceive of capacities in conditions of being effectively deployed (cf. Kurakov, 1966). Such a dialectic would go beyond the mere circularity and tedium of a certain *modus vivendi*. It would turn to be shaped as a spiral dynamic that, although tending to infinity, always returns to finitude in order to see its expansions consummated. That is to say, it consolidates and deepens the satisfactions achieved (needs covered) and required for the progressive expansion of capacities.

The development of capacities, the active facet of the human condition at stake here, is the key to the process. But it is a key that cannot be deployed abstractly or unilaterally—i.e., self-absorbed—as in the "realm of freedom," for to do so would be to plot against its own development. It is a key dependent, in turn, on the satisfaction of needs; a satisfaction that precedes it as much as it is its result. Otherwise, lost its organic unity with the need, capacities will result whose deployment will sooner rather than later meet their demise. The *link* we propose would be no *closure system* in the manner of a "padlock" whereby one part fixes its counterpart in a mechanical compound, preventing its movement. It is, rather, a connection that *links* the determinations of an organic system: that of the life in common. By establishing the reciprocal necessity of its moments, it provides for the self-enhancement of each counterpart through the reciprocal spur that their realization supposes.

This articulation presupposed, we could expect the greatest development of capacities in the domain of self-realization: there where individual dispositions would have fewer immediate conditioning factors—those of "necessity"—for their practical consummation. This would reinforce the link between freedom and necessity that we are pursuing here, since from "the cusps" of *the human* we would return with fundamental contributions for the satisfaction of *the prosaic*. Now, it is highly debatable that human creation best flourishes where it lacks immediate practical requirements. This, especially for a dialectical perspective faithful to the value of the negative as an impediment from whose overrunning the affirmative is forged and acquires reality; for what concerns us, the objectification of the human capacities through the transformation of Nature by means of human labour. A non-idealized view of personal realization does not

have to renounce to such a negativity in the relationship of humans with Nature and with their fellow human beings.

What matters, in any case, is that the so-called available time of persons would contribute to subsistence requirements through a free activity in which they would realize themselves in the full deployment of their capacities. The dichotomy between "the necessary" and "the free," then, would collapse. Each one would deploy his or her capacity in satisfying individual, collective, and communal subsistence needs ("realm of necessity"), which anthropologically would not be a priori different from the satisfaction of the personal needs of self-realization ("realm of freedom").[13] In the creative exercise by which they develop their capacities, human beings would be in a position to realize themselves, seeking to satisfy the totality of their needs: *the productive would be, then, to realize ourselves*.

According to what has been argued, the very notion of *necessity* should be redefined with the purpose of maintaining the communist bet in its radicality; that is, distant from any asceticism and rather persistent in expanding our possibilities of enjoyment based on the development of our productive capacities (cf. *Grundrisse II*, p. 97, in Marx, 1987b). Thus, we propose the need for self-realization as *another form of the human necessity* that, like any of them, will be materially viable from the metabolic activity with Nature. All this would happen in tune with the early Marxian demand to position ourselves from "the root" of "man himself" (cf. *Introduction*, p. 182, in Marx, 1975a). However, the dualism of realms does not carry out this critical task of thinking the necessity proper to freedom in a communist society. It thus neglects the anthropological consideration—at the root of Marx's work—that labour (the society-nature metabolism, the struggle with the world of external requirements for consummating our own creative objectifications) *is* realization for our species and its members. In a communist mode of production, labour would be a positive encounter of freedom and necessity: an activity that transcends the merely animal passive reception and does not alienate

[13] Our analysis presupposes that the bet for the realization of the particular subject in and from the common implies an enrichment and wider deployment of the common through personal realizations. Moreover, from the Marxian anthropology that motivates our interpellation, we can ask ourselves: What would personal freedom be in the absence of communal needs? It would seem to be an empty place; just as personal freedom would be—as we argue—outside the requirements of subsistence.

itself in the process from its natural conditions of existence (cf. *Paris Manuscripts*, pp. 296–297).

The problem we identify in relation to the thesis of the dualism of realms goes beyond that of the consistency of a philosophical work. At stake is the self-incapacitation of a community that requires a most elevated and unprecedented productivity in order to harvest "the best" that human species can offer itself from the "realm of freedom." This opens the door to the utopianism and the idyll of the individualities detached from their belonging to the common; individualities that, disregarding this belonging, could end up plotting against themselves rather than knowing their self-realization.

It is in the very *Grundrisse* that we find an alternative to think, from Marx, this articulation between freedom and necessity; an alternative where freedom is regarded as the development of human capacities qua productive forces. Specifically, the issue appears in relation to enjoyment:

> The capacity for enjoyment is a condition for it, and hence the basic means for it, and this capacity is created by the development of an individual disposition, productive power. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 97)

In the immediate term, enjoyment is the satisfied need. At the same time, the "capacity for enjoyment" is a certain subjective constitution of the need to be satisfied that—as it is evident—presupposes an active attitude, a development of the productive force that is but the development of an "individual disposition." It could be presented in the following terms: To the extent that I am in a position to enjoy (satisfaction of needs), enjoyment is feasible, being the case that these conditions refer to the development of individual talents (deployment of capacities). The need, for example, to listen to music implies the development of the capacity for such a listening. At the same time, this capacity is cultivated in the practical movement by which the need it produces is satisfied, i.e., the requirements of musical listening, whether material or spiritual.

According to the Feuerbachian expressions of the *Paris Manuscripts*, the satisfaction of the need supposes the development of a certain capacity or its previous cultivation:

> On the other hand, let us look at this in its subjective aspect. Just as only music awakens in man the sense of music, and just as the most beautiful

> music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear—is [no] object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers—it can therefore only exist for me insofar as my essential power exists for itself as a subjective capacity; because the meaning of an object for me goes only so far as *my* sense goes (has only a meaning for a sense corresponding to that object). (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 301)

The object is the satisfier of the need that can only be disposed of as such insofar as it can be assimilated from a certain capacity, the capacity of the musical ear, in this case. The richness of the cultivation of human sensitivity (development of capacities) generates needs that demand their respective satisfiers:

> Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form—in short, *senses* capable of human gratification, senses affirming themselves as essential powers of man). (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 301)

The satisfaction of a need, then, presupposes the development of a capacity that makes possible precisely such a satisfaction. In this way, "the free," as the deployment of capacities, influences and spurs the course of "the necessary," to which it returns time and again. In the terms of political economy, Marx expresses this articulation as follows:

> The saving of labour time is equivalent to the increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which itself, as the greatest productive force, in turn *reacts upon* the productive power of labour. (*Grundrisse II*, p. 97, my emphasis)

The dichotomy "free time" (full development of the individual)/"necessary time" (place of the productive power of labour) is maintained, but the return of the free over the necessary from "full development" is indicated in this way: human capacities are realized as satisfaction of social needs; at the same time, in the experience of this satisfaction, capacities themselves are enriched and unfolded.

Of course, the issue refers to the permanence of the split between "the necessary" and "the surplus" in the productive processes of communism. From the perspective of alienated labour under capitalism, the surplus is reintroduced into the necessary for the accumulation of capital ("productive labour"). From the communist perspective of work as self-realization,

on the other hand, the surplus would appear as a free activity where capacities are deployed. The pending issue is to characterize the terms in which this would eventually impact the satisfaction of subsistence needs according to voluntarily arranged associative designs. Thus, the connection that we pursue here *remains to be thought*, although we consider that Marx is the inescapable starting point: "For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals" (*Grundrisse II*, p. 94).

Here, the fundamental unity of the human is established in terms of *the satisfiers that we are capable of providing ourselves* from the development of our capacities. Wealth is, in principle, but the totality of goods and services available to us. Nevertheless, it cannot be confined to a discrete ensemble of objects or relations of provision and satisfaction because humanity—according to Marx—is the constant reinvention of itself. Hence, from the viewpoint of the conditions of reproduction of the wealth in which we can satiate ourselves, this is ultimately the very force of production that we generate as a community that articulates the different individuals and collectives. From this viewpoint, wealth is revealed as the very deployment of our capacities. In turn, the force of production is but the human capacity ready for the transformation of the natural world. It is a transformation whose mediate and immediate aim is wealth in the form of goods and services, satisfiers of needs. In conclusion, wealth (satisfaction of needs) and productive forces (development of capacities) comprise the fundamental unity in the dialectic of communist self-realization that concerns us.

In this effort to rethink the content of necessity inscribed in the freedom proper to a communist society, we propose that personal necessity is satisfied in the development of our own capacities or in the movement of our transforming freedom (from which we transform ourselves. In short, freedom is realized in and from necessity): thus is defined the self-movement by which, *developing our capacities, we satisfy our needs*.

Having sublated the dichotomy between "the necessary" and "the free," the notion of "necessary labour," understood as that activity in which human beings are subjected—even if they consciously choose it as an inescapable partial subjection—and unreconciled with themselves, must be set aside. In the context of capitalist domination, emancipation from necessary labour is directed against the necessary/surplus dichotomy where the measure of wealth is decided by labour time, by a labour of exploitation and alienation. The struggle against capital vindicates the

freedom of the individual in the "available time" they could enjoy were it not for that domination. On the other hand, once positively situated—no longer in the reactive mode of class struggle—in a communist society, "the necessary" and "the surplus" (now "the free") would become an inessential dichotomy. The dichotomy would be dissolved there where "the free" would no longer equal "the surplus." Human freedom, rather, would refer to the movement of the ensemble of its (material and spiritual) needs of subsistence and self-realization: freedom would be but the movement of its immanent necessity.

We thus turn to conceive free activity as the result of the deployment of human capacities. These are the condition for the satisfaction of physical and self-realization needs, under an always historically positioned perspective of progress. Here, subsistence ceases to be "the foreign ground" of freedom, belonging to another "realm" and *another mode of being*. Expanding in this way the concept of necessity articulates as one the movement whereby the immediate physical reproduction of the individual reverts to the realization of personality, which for its part returns to the natural and social life it belongs to. This return immanently outlines individuality as a *being in community* that knows and sees transparent this relation by which its freedom is only possible in the community. We have already underlined it from *The German Ideology* to complete our characterization of Marxian communism toward the end of our second chapter:

> Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community. (*The German Ideology*, p. 78)

Therefore, the lack proper to need would acquire its satisfaction in the deployment of its counterpart, in the active potential of capacity. Or else, this deployment of capacity would be but a personal need for subsistence and self-realization *in* and *from* the communally managed productive activity: *the* social *reconciliation of freedom and necessity*. Thus, the satisfaction of personal self-realization needs through the deployment of human capacities would have an impact on the satisfaction of subsistence needs, once the corresponding structures of social management of production and resource distribution have been designed. In fact, this has to be the case if the viability of this possible model of social organization is to be ensured.

The representation of a "realm of freedom" where the human activity would not be defined by any external necessity, but exclusively marked by internal needs, is difficult to conceive from a philosophy of praxis such as the one offered by Marx. A certain reception discusses the presence of romanticism in this issue (cf. della Volpe, 1977, p. 105; Kolakowski, 1980, pp. 406–414; Schmidt, 1971, pp. 78–79). The difficulty lies in that Marx's work departs from a focus on the conditions of production and reproduction of the transforming human activity: transforming Nature and its own animal-being and species-being, in the early Feuerbachian vocabulary of the *Paris Manuscripts*.[14]

That course of a human freedom that represents itself *free of* its mundane determinations leads us to an unnecessary and aporetic dualism. In a communist mode of production such as the one here delineated, the "man rich in needs" would freely self-produce as the generator and satisfier of his own needs through the deployment of his capacities; capacities that would result from the development of the life in common, whether in its facet of subsistence or of self-realization. This refers to historical-philosophical "premises," "presuppositions" or "conditions" (*die Voraussetzungen*) for Marx:

> the satisfaction of the first need, the action of satisfying and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired, leads to new needs; and this creation of new needs is the first historical act. (*The German Ideology*, p. 42)

In accordance with the conditions of a society of free and (mutually) different individuals—such as the one we have described from Marxian sources—it could even be expected that, far from stopping or slowing down, the generation of new needs would escalate. Indeed, given the dialectic between freedom and necessity we have been outlining for

[14] The species-being (*Gattungswesen*) refers to the distinctions our species possesses in a universal and free manner against the immediate natural determination. It animates the whole of Marx's work through different formulations—e.g., in the quote about the dualism of realms—as we have appreciated in part in this study. It can be found since the classic section on estranged labour of the first of the *Paris Manuscripts*, where the alienation from our species-essence appears as one of its fundamental forms (cf. pp. 275–277).

communist society, the deployment of self-realization would bring with it an expansion of the ensemble of needs.[15]

The activity deployed for satisfying our subsistence needs cannot be conceived as the self-negation in an *improper way of life* that we cannot but assume; that is, as the subjection to an external power (natural or social) in the "realm of necessity." We cannot conceive of it, at least, from this dialectic of personal freedom that we propose from the link between capacities and needs. On the contrary, not only would this production be subject to the control of associated producers, humanizing it to a large extent (cf. Schmidt, 1971, pp. 142–144), but the transforming activity itself leading to self-realization would return to the domain of subsistence to contribute to the satisfaction of its requirements. Thus, the deployment of capacities in the "realm of necessity" would be but movement and realization of human freedom. In short, communism would appear as that society where external necessity is intended to be internalized through its humanization realized as the development of its productive capacities.

This would entail a reconversion of the content of labour itself and its technical management, for example, along the lines of the *convivial organization of industrial labour*—understood as a practical design for the self-realization of the producers—proposed by Ivan Illich (cf. 1973). Here, the demand is that productive activity be a creative activity and human self-realization also as an activity satisfying the requirements of subsistence. No doubt, we can present many examples suggesting that a person could not *always* be realized in the productive activity that serves subsistence. Given this suspicion, it should be made clear that we are not trying to propose some *model of perfect coexistence* in the manner of a refurbished *model of perfect competition*. One such model would be but another variety of the technical delirium by which certain facets of the Modern Age led us to believe that humanity can be reified. Despite liberal fears, thinking communism is not an enterprise for the mass production of automatons. This has already been done, and quite

[15] Of course, the *incessant expansion of needs* is a historical register proper to capitalism. Its possible redefinition will refer to the renewed terms of personal realization in a society whose successive generations leave behind the pattern of a mode of production devoted to the abstract infinitude of the accumulation of values by means of the M-C-M' circuit. In this sense, we could discuss the extent to which these *Voraussetzungen* of *The German Ideology* (cf. pp. 41–43) respond to a historical-philosophical generalization of features that would be more characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, which implies discussing the very issue of historical progress in Marx's work.

well, by the logic of capital. What is at issue, rather, is the design of conscious and renewable structures of social organization where labour can actually be self-realization. All this, clearly, beyond the many contingencies and "imperfections" that a communist society would have to deal with.

Likewise, from the *link* we propose for the dialectic between capacities and needs, it would not be simple to always establish, in factual and operative terms, where subsistence "ends" and where self-realization "begins." In specific terms, the permanent renewal of subsistence demands leads at least to the following considerations: (a) the perspective of Marxian anthropology on the constant expansion of needs throughout social history; (b) capitalist society and its sense of *progress* as the sociality from which communism proceeds and as, *at least*, its historical point of departure; and (c) what the development of self-realization implies for subsistence in a society of free and (mutually) different individuals voluntarily associated. In general terms, it is precisely the need to confront the incessant renewal of our species, as a humanly emancipated species, what interpellate us in pursuit of a particular response for the reproduction of this type of society.

However, the dialectic between freedom and necessity does not occur only in the "realm of necessity". The "realm of freedom"—where an unconditioned practice, or one free from external conditioning, would be deployed—also supposes this dialectic and its own work vis-à-vis the negative. The pair activity/passivity is reproduced from the interest of self-realization that, instead of being lost in the ether, has to respond to the demands of the materiality in which it acts. Thanks to this mundaneness of its activity, self-realization will be able to return from "the highest human interests" to its elementary conditions of subsistence with new answers to face its constantly renewed demands.

In the *principle of different right* of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, the demand for the contribution of the particular subject to the common is expressed as: "From each according to his abilities" (p. 87). Well, this contribution is the productive force constituted by the associated producers: the greater the productive force, the more it sublates the purely animal need, but also the greater the satisfaction of the needs of self-realization. This is not only in accordance with the ethical-anthropological demand—which runs through the whole of Marx's work—by which our species humanizes the world and itself in deploying its activity. But also because there is precisely a connection

of mutual practical necessity between personal realization and the best satisfaction of the requirements of individual, collective, and communal subsistence. In line with Marx's proposal, conceiving communism as a *growing deployment of freedom*—based on the preceding achievements of capitalist society—implies conceiving the freedom of the associated producers in and from a non-alienated labour that would find its culmination in the transforming activities of personal realization. The highest degree of productivity could be expected from these activities. Not because of the abandonment of the negativity inherent to labour in the relation to its natural means and objects, but because individuals would have already left aside the conditions of *alienated* labour proper to "natural history."

Our theoretical approach aims to prevent this scenario from being installed in a unilateral connection between "the necessary" and "the free" to be, rather, a *link* where "the free" socially reencounters "the necessary." We intend, then, to finally settle accounts with Feuerbach's materialism; the same one that was committed to the shape of a necessity merely given, internal, mute, that never becomes protagonist or active in front to itself (cf. the sixth of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, in Marx, 1976). The dualism of realms still takes for granted a domain of necessity where humanity is outlined as a certain passivity (in attention to its animal condition) which, once the working day is over, would become the activity proper to the counterpart realm: that of freedom. In turn, the alternative of a communist horizon that redefines the notion of necessity can be proposed from Marx himself. According to our argumentation, and as far as human requirements are concerned, necessity would come to be: (a) a capacity of satisfaction produced by ourselves (in the animal and in what is distinctive of our species); (b) resolved by ourselves (thanks to the development of our own transforming activity); and, consequently, (c) consummated as the element in which our freedom is deployed. If human freedom is, in effect, the movement of socially determined necessity and the former reverts on the latter to satisfy it, then necessity ceases to be an object of disdain or a mere remnant of our lower dimensions (animality). Rather, it would shape a system of mediations and would become a full member of the community of free and (mutually) different individuals that concerns us.

To a large extent, the development of the productive forces does not simply make it possible to sublate the "realm of necessity"—from the dualistic framework under consideration—but becomes identical with the

satisfaction of the requirements of the domain of self-realization needs. Therefore, *the greater the cultivation of personality (satisfaction of human needs), the greater the deployment of capacities (human forces), the greater the productive force (transformation of Nature), and, consequently, the greater the satisfaction of necessity (satisfaction of subsistence needs)*. At the same time, the satisfaction of individual, collective, and communal needs is a condition for the cultivation of personality. Hence, subsistence is resolved in self-realization and self-realization in subsistence. According to the formulation of the dualism of realms, freedom is conceived, then, as the disposition that places the development of the productive forces as a Kantian "end in itself." In our perspective, this freedom cannot but be the *human self-movement that satisfies all its necessity* and abides by itself, instead of abandoning the "realm of necessity" in some idealized representation of itself.

4.2 The Management of the Common

According to our discussion, the dualism of realms poses a paradoxical emancipatory course if we take note of how radically anchored in historical necessity Marx's reasoning was. While the bet is made for a domain of non-determination (i.e., the "realm of freedom"), its counterpart (the "realm of necessity") is required and appealed to as a *mere instrument*. In Marx's communism, science and technique would replace to the greatest extent possible the slaves who in the classical Greek model were in charge of satisfying this most elementary realm. It is a domain that persists in spite of all efforts against it; a damnation to which man is delivered time and again, and from which he seeks to escape as soon as possible by shortening the working day. It is also a means void of content from the perspective of human interests; a space that in itself has nothing to offer to freedom, except to open the door to it, for its substance would be foreign to it. It is presented as a mechanism subject to a certain physical legality in which the transforming activity of labour on Nature operates. For this very reason, it can be satisfied from the void that the instrumentality of technique represents with respect to the human aspirations conceived as "ends in themselves."

The materialist conception of history that Marx bequeathed to us is disavowed by the assertion that human freedom cannot fit into the metabolism whereby our productive activity is, time and again, marked by the needs of subsistence. Freedom, then, ends up being affirmed as

something other vis-à-vis mundaneness and its materiality. With this, we only return to what has been long and repeatedly expressed by the various idealist conceptions that preceded the work that concerns us. This is why human freedom, that domain of creation and *spontaneity* not subject to necessity, rules in its own right. However, it rules always with the nuisance of having to deal again with necessity, which manifests itself as the indispensable foundation for its establishment and that it simply does not know how to finally put aside. Unable to abandon necessity, human freedom has to return every day to its negation, denying itself in the course of the working day; even if, as in the communist variety, under its greatest possible shortening.

The alternative of a humanly emancipated community—which we have tried to articulate from Marxian foundations—presupposes that freedom is but the movement by which our individual, collective, and communal needs of subsistence and self-realization are satisfied. In this movement, all the activities necessary for the reproduction of the life in common would have to be disposed as realization of freedom and therefore as the full living content of our species. The Kantian turn of the dualism of realms proposed in the third book of *Capital* distances us from this possibility. It prevents a radical reflection on the role of necessity in the deployment of freedom. In so doing, it discards the question of the conditions of reproduction of a community of free and (mutually) different individuals. It prevents us from situating ourselves in the *standpoint of the concrete* (cf. *Grundrisse I*, Introduction), where the *management of the common* would be established according to the diversity of humanly emancipated interests.

To bet for the voluntary and conscious design of what concerns all the members of the community demands to privilege the model of high rationalization of the productive processes—which humanity has known through the logic of the capital—over the unpredictability and irrationality of the circulation of commodities. In the communist variant, this demands to privilege concerted foresight over the inefficiency of free competition dependent on private labour. Marx is confident that such a concertation can be consummated without political mediations (cf. Nordahl, 1987). This representation refers to the "total loss/rewin" polarity from which Marx has conceived the dialectic of the revolutionary processes—e.g., constitution of the proletariat, capitalist crises, emancipatory struggles, etc. (cf. Wood, 1984)—that would lead to the communist

opening: "in a word, is the *complete loss* of man and hence can win itself only through the *complete rewinning of man*" (*Introduction*, p. 186).

The problem in the passage from one polarity to another is the prevalence of a perspective of absolute abandonment and rupture vis-à-vis capitalist society. This is the case, at least, in some crucial determinations for the viability of the communist enterprise, such as the management of the life in common. The Marxian dialectic—always implacable in its reflection on the logic of capital and its critique—is sidelined when it comes to these issues. The trace of ontological and anthropological-philosophical continuity is lost at the moment of thinking the emancipatory rupture and communism. That is, when considering the transit from "natural history" to "human history" and the emancipatory circumstance properly so-called in terms of a total reconversion of praxis. In this way, the dialectic is largely abandoned when thinking human emancipation as a process that concerns the organization of the totality of human capacities to face the totality of the needs of subsistence and self-realization of those who form the community of freely associated individuals. In a word, when thinking *an organization whose object is the common good*.

Long before *Capital*, the bipartition of social history between a "natural history" and a "human history" of *The German Ideology* represented communism under the tenor we expose. Between one period and the other, revolutionary transition would mediate, which would conclude in radical emancipation. The treatment of this distinction in *The German Ideology* offers the tension between: (a) a "hard" materialist profile which accounts for the determinations of "natural history" and where the unilaterality of "the given" dominates in the form of the typical allusions to the "material basis"; and (b) the announcement of a social space where the individual activity will be able to deploy its redefining and free character as part of "human history," and where the material determinations are losing prominence by virtue of the progress achieved there. In accordance with our exposition, and beyond the polemical spirit of *The German Ideology*, we notice in this bipartition something more than the rhetorical imperatives of a particular exposition. We stumble upon conceptual orientations deeply rooted in the Marxian approach to human emancipation. All this, with the vicissitude, the scope, and the limits of his representation of communism, which would later end up expressed in the dualism of realms just discussed. Of course, the issue was also raised by Engels (cf. 1989,

pp. 153–158), albeit in the form of a "leap" between realms, a question problematized by Schmidt in terms of the impossibility of sublating labour (cf. 1971, p. 136).

"Human history" would rest on the leading role of the conscious will of the associated producers. Freedom, understood as practically deployed consciousness and will, is prominently manifested in the vindication of the revolutionary rupture and access to communism as the abandonment of the determinations of "natural history. Communism is thus presented as "a new beginning." The Marxian distinction between "prehistory" and "history" of the Preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (cf. p. 264, in Marx, 1987a) expresses the same orientation of *The German Ideology*, with its distinction between "natural history" and "human history." There, the remaining dualism in Marx between necessity and freedom would lead us from the determinism of necessity proper to "prehistory" to the dualism of realms distinctive of communism, where "prehistory" remains in the mode of the "realm of necessity" (cf. Panayotakis, 2004, pp. 134–135). Along this terminology, Prior expresses the impasses of this dualism between "prehistory" and "history" as a strength *contest* between freedom and necessity (cf. 2004, p. 227). This dualistic permanence, we maintain, would make it impossible to think communism as a concrete horizon of human realizations or a scenario where freedom be realized in and from the movement of the natural and social need that constitutes our species; necessity that is satisfied through the development of our capacities. Outside this dialectic, the scene of communism appears as the abstract harmony of reciprocally indifferent wills (a void universality) that would leave behind the ontological finitude which is inherent to them; something that is possible only in the illusions stemming from the privilege reserved for some individuals in class societies.

Once communism is consummated, the course of social history becomes the *abandonment of all the natural limitations of labour* (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 80) so that the conscious will of the associated individuals becomes the driving and lucid potential harmonizing human diversity and freeing it from its preceding self-negations. This is what the potential of a hypothetical communist mode of production is all about. Drawing on cases such as Wikipedia, Erik Olin Wright points to some of the conditions of this renewed form of economic organization. He highlights the broad participation of producers, their direct and deliberative interactions, and their democratic governance, which—as we shall argue—bring us back to the need to exercise political power in terms, by the way,

also renewed; that is, in communist terms (cf. 2010, pp. 138 ff.). Nevertheless, the orientation of the Marxian reasoning insists on the rupture with and the possibilities of a human freedom indeterminate regarding its conditions of gestation and reproduction. In the Marxian treatment of communism, the interest in the role of the preceding social determinations tends to decline; in particular, in the political determinations of its management from the viewpoint of the ensemble of available human resources.

According to the modern horizon of Marxian reflection, communism has its sit in the freedom of individuals. It is not about returning to some substantive or traditional community, but about the voluntary association of *individuals* who cooperate to produce their means of life. After all, the Marxian conception of history is one that bets for a modern progress. Thus, the history of human beings will not cease to be the continuity of the social-historical "premises," "presuppositions," or "conditions" (*die Voraussetzungen*) that governed "natural history." In terms of the dialectical logic with which Marx reads social history, the various levels of praxis that might result from the practical deployment of such *Voraussetzungen*—including politics—are expected to undergo a reshaping in tune with the progressive development of human needs and capacities.

This can be estimated for other dimensions such as science, art, or institutionalized education. In dealing with politics in Communism, however, Marx is dominated by the inclination to "abandon," "cancel," and "abolish," rather than to "sublate" in the Hegelian sense (*Aufheben*) the historically traversed experience in "natural history," reshaping it. This inclination is manifest in the silence about the foreseeable difficulties for the social implementation and efficacy of a conscious design that assumes the diversity of individuals in their renewed *historical finitude*. The visionary gaze placed on the shape of the "total rupture" would seem to have invisibilized the historical permanence of individuality as a source of conflict reproducing communist society. Indeed, it would no longer be possible to return to the primitive community, since communism, as thought by Marx, can only arise from the capitalist mode of production and from the individuality therein engendered.

Not to politically problematize the new conditions of life in a hypothetical communist society presupposes a typically modern faith in progress: with the appropriate technical resources available to them, individuals can fulfill their personal goals without major practical obstacles. The *means* (technical rationality) and the *ends* (the bets of the will) are taken for

granted and the harmony of human diversity is then fixed as an unquestionable datum of the new social order (cf. Tarcus, 2008). We rather bet for a conception of the (non-metaphysical) teleological conditionality of human action in communism. In this conception, there is neither the *means in itself* nor the *end in itself*, but a movement of *realization of different human wills that take charge of their mediations*. Consequently, the latter would not be contraposed to the former in a polarity between "the free" and "the necessary." The free would deploy its own course of necessity and realization; a course that includes the development of the productive forces that, after all, are the very human capacities turned into objectifications for the satisfaction of all the requirements of our species including those of subsistence.

Hence, as we cannot just abandon the problem of the generation of the conditions whereby human freedom guarantees its own existence, we still have to ask ourselves: Is it to be expected that all the "material collisions in life" (*The German Ideology*, p. 81) result from class conflicts regarding the property of the means of production and that, therefore, once social classes have been liquidated, such collisions will simply disappear? The question must be posed considering the radical vindication of the personality of the individual, which Marxian communism advocates and which would place us before an unprecedented recognition of individual differences. Is it not to be expected, instead, that these differences will force new collisions, for example, regarding the destination of social products? Will not also there be disagreements—and not exactly insignificant ones—regarding the mode of productive activity or the technical requirements of the division of labour?

As an example of these dissensions, and in line with the dualism of realms itself, we could mention those concerning the inescapable reification "quotas" of our own activity in the "realm of necessity." After all, such an activity would not always accord with the particular wills of individuals due to the exchange and multiplication of human needs inherited from the conformation of life under capitalism and which would tend to develop in the context of a broader consideration of the differences. A definition of the social relations and representations of such a society—structured around the most radical vindication of individual freedom—could not be expected to result in any kind of spontaneous harmony. Such harmony could be represented as a scenario where human beings are exempt from conflicts affecting the management of the life in common; specifically, from conflicts that cannot be resolved through

their simplification by some master technical design, but that require to be tackled in their complexity. The process of this resolution will meet valuations and concrete decisions (coinciding or contraposed) not only of an ethical character, but also political ones, for its object is *the common*.

The perspective of the common does not seem, then, to be the immediate belonging to a *natural community*. It is manifested, instead, as the articulation of associated individuals who—from their particularity and their reciprocal differences, as well as under a certain finitude of resources and requirements—form the common according to a personal interest inseparable from cooperation. In the light of this, some questions arise. Do we not need an *appropriate dimension* to take charge of the practical dynamisms stemming from this historical and anthropological basis? Should not political activity be that scenario of conflict and consensus where such dynamisms would be tackled no longer from class struggle but from *authentically human* antagonisms concerning the common?

The vocation for "abolition" we have expounded ends up proceeding behind the back of the historical dialectic from which human beings have shaped their mutual relations and those with Nature. It is decided in favor of a *redemption* that does not problematize and loses track of the new conditionality of the human becoming. Thus, politics is declared dispensable for viabilizing the new form of exchange and cooperation required in communism. Rather than remaining attentive to the reshaping of social products, Marx's representation of communism here neglects that, although circumstances are recreated, they are never simply "left behind." Thus, the curtailment of such and such aspects of praxis—in our case, politics—cannot be decided at will, whether in practice or in theory.

In various traditions of Marxist historiography, this disposition toward redemption—which does not problematize the factual, social, and material conditions of reproduction of a communist society—responds to a reading of Marx's work that distinguishes three fundamental moments: (a) original *human essence*, (b) *alienated existence* by means of social relations, and (c) *hope for reconciliation* in the "realm of freedom." From them, communist freedom is consummated as *transcendence* vis-à-vis the course of social and material necessity. This necessity no longer being an obstacle to that freedom, humanity would become—very much in tune with the negative perspective of liberal freedom—*free from* its conditions

of reproduction.[16] In our view, the emancipatory commitment expressed here falls short and becomes utopian. It does not confront the conflict of anthropological basis proper to the "ontology of social being" (cf. Lukács, 1971) and that is historically founded on the individuality that stems from the capitalist mode of production.

Faced with these paths, the cultivation of individuality inherited from the capitalist mode of production—which would only be potentiated in communism in the form of the development of the personality of the associated producers—and the ontological finitude of social praxis block the way to the Marxian thesis of the "abolition of the political". The thesis of the abandonment of the political in communism supposes both (a) the infinitude of the production of a technically administered wealth and (b) the reciprocal spontaneous assent of individuals in the shape of the "total man" (cf. Garaudy, 1967, p. 75) who would no longer know the individual-society opposition.

Having left behind the impoverishing patterns of mercantile homogenization and liberal citizenship, the dualism of realms thus presents the route to a merely technical solution for the management of the common. Furthermore, it presumes the spontaneous substantial harmony of the particular wills in line with the organization of the primitive community—where the conflicts resulting from the division of labour were still to take place. The first variety, the presumption of technical omnipotence, places human potentials in a non-human mode: that of infinitude. The second, that of a fundamentally monochord *koinonia* between wills (or at least one that would not grant a decisive place to conflict), is implausible from the cultivation of personality and the aspirations of particular subjects that would prevail in a communist society as a result of the Modern Period: there where interindividual and inter-collective antagonism would have the most diverse occasions of realization.

We can turn again to the Preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*—regularly quoted for rather orthodox purposes—to situate the permanence of antagonism in communism regarding the indetermination left to us by the dualism of realms:

[16] Cf., for instance, the chapter "Ontological and moral aspects" in Mészáros (1970) or the chapter "Human essence and history" in Márkus (2014). A synthesis of this perspective appears in Prior (2004, pp. 170–176).

> The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—*antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism* but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence—but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation. (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, pp. 263–264, my emphasis)

We see that the continuity of antagonism is established. However, this antagonism is reserved for the strictly interindividual domain, in the manner of *authentically human conflicts*, on the understanding that all social conflict would be canceled with the disappearance of social classes. Thus, the polarity by which the determinations of material production are univocally associated with the domain of necessity—where the social conflicts proper to prehistory are specifically rooted—is established anew. Once again, there is no problematization as to how the interaction of the wills of the free and (mutually) different individuals of a communist society can cope with the finite disposition of capacities for the satisfaction of the whole of their needs. It is in this communist scene that the viability of this social formation is at stake, that is, the plausibility of non-class-based social conflicts in a scenario where the diversity of the wills of the associated producers would prevail.

We cease to consider, consequently, real human needs and capacities in order to fall into the non-recognition and even the oblivion of antagonism and the ontological finitude of our condition. In his defense of a non-deterministic understanding of history in Marx, Eric Hobsbawm also maintains the identity between *communism* and *abolition of antagonism*. For him, by not affirming that identity, we would:

> lose two things which were important to Karl Marx and certainly to his followers (myself included): (a) the sense that the triumph of socialism is the logical end of all historical evolution to date; and (b) that it marks the end of "pre-history" in the sense that it cannot and will not be an "antagonistic" society. (Hobsbawm, 1984, p. 45)

This is the perspective of probably the most renowned Marxist historian of the twentieth century; an author far removed from narrow orthodoxies. The dualism of realms, then, largely marks the path of very diverse Marxisms, both orthodox and non-deterministic. The scene is

paradoxical. In communist society, the properly human would finally find a place, and the vindication of personal differences would present itself as a concrete and superior viewpoint as opposed to the narrow abstract faith in the spontaneous harmony of individuals so dear to liberalism. In that same society, though, we would fail to consider the determinations proper to a life capable of vindicating the concrete being of particular subjects, their interests and the multiplicity of their potential antagonisms. We would also lose sight of the finite reality of the concrete conditions that define our species-being—disposed toward self-realization—as a natural and social being capable of producing from an always limited technique.

The way we see it, the distance posed here from difference and finitude—that is, from the *concrete*—goes back to the representation by which "the unconditional premisses for production" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 439) that would have resulted from the capitalist mode of production would be asserted in communism. This unconditionality—which seems to dispose us toward the immediate solution of any human antagonism and any technical requirement—presupposes the "full development of the productive forces" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 466) that would be possible once, in communism, the contradiction between the current relations of production and the development of such forces is sublated. This, at least, in the sense that it would no longer be the case that certain "particular conditions of production are posited as the limit to the development of the productive forces," but that the very development of the productive forces be its own "presupposition" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 466).

The radical redefinition of the terms in which the productive forces would develop in communism can be made (a) from the political requirements of its conscious and concerted management by the associated producers or (b) leaving aside the human presuppositions of individual, collective, and communal activity in communism, that is, the historically shaped anthropological difference and ontological finitude. In the second case, which we associate with the representation of the dualism of realms, a certain autotelism of the technical-productive processes would be shaped. That is, the surrender to the belief in an immanent and infinite technical deployment that becomes harmonious by itself and that would have renounced to dwell on the new contents and forms assumed by human conflicts. The conflict and dialectic of human activity would thus give way to the *spontaneity of technical automatism*. In terms of the future course of the State, a non-Marxist author such as Bobbio puts it as follows:

> What matters in any case is that the idea of the extinction of the State is always linked in some way to the idea of a society that does not need collective force to survive. (Bobbio, 1997, p. 206)

If technical omnipotence and the harmony of wills so ensure it, the political dimension of human activity may, in effect, be set aside in favor of an idealized vision of the society-nature and individual-society connections for the reproduction of communal existence; a vision where social antagonism no longer has a place.

In our view, a society founded on the rich individuality of the associated producers who reproduce it and on the complex conscious articulation of human capacities and needs could not be sustained without the political *activity* exercised on the common thus constituted. Not, at least, from our interpretation of the constitutive elements of a Marxian communist society. We understand political activity as that positive, conscious, and permanent activity of the ensemble of individual, collective, and communal wills and interests that are realized in the *totality of social interdependencies* and that decide on them. These wills and interests cannot but be exerted on this totality given their own requirements of optimization and reproduction. Freely associated producers need, then, the political dimension of praxis, the activity, and the power that are proper to it. In this way, they will be able to face the unprecedented task of articulating their particular wills, which will not be simple varieties of a primordial substance from which some monochord consensus could be established. The route would await them of complex and conflicting social processes for facing the finitude of resources where their materially determined being lives and from where their mutual dependence and reciprocal need would settle down.

For Eagleton, the issue of finitude appears (a) in relation to the reciprocal limitation of each in communist society and (b) under the perspective that human needs themselves are not infinite. After all, we are still dealing with the dispositions of a historically situated will (cf. 2010, p. 109). Well then, whether for coordinating interests or for establishing the issues that would not admit such a convergence at a certain point, this instance of mediation (the political dimension of human activity) would be essential for the joint reproduction of the self-conscious social totality that is sought here. From it, personal realization is expected to be promoted in terms unknown in "natural history."

The concrete forms of structuring the political dimension of human activity in a communist society would be expected to free the associated producers from the romantic surrender to spontaneity. Such a surrender would condemn this emancipatory project to failure. At least, insofar as its aspiration be the exercise of the "real freedom" of individual and collective interests which, situated in the difference of their particularity, cannot be presumed to be harmonious without further ado. It would also be expected to free them from the delusion of the master technical design in which to abandon the fate of the common: a delusion that would renew the shape of the Smithian "invisible hand" beyond the irrationality of capitalist circulation. *On account of* its administrative, statistical, etc. abstraction against the evolution of human interests and the deployment of their needs, it would end up fixing the organic composition of the life in common under some format also condemned to failure. So inevitable is its inadequacy vis-à-vis the multifaceted progress of human freedom and/or the development of the life in common.

Once the human imprint of its determination and its purpose (the personal self-realization of individuals) has been established, it is not sought that such forms of a *communist politicity* become the "substance"—in the classical sense of "element"—where personal freedom can be realized. This is not the shape by which particular ends are realized in the domain of the common as a supreme transcendent end, and that justifies Aristotle's characterization of ethical inquiry as "a sort of political inquiry" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a 15–1094b 10, in Aristotle, 2011). In a communist society, everyone would realize himself or herself as a personality stemming from the community and remaining in it as a counterpoint to his or her self-realization. The aspiration for an indeterminate individual freedom, or for one *free from* the requirements of the common, would be but a chimera, unfeasible in practice. But this does not result in either the formulation or the praise of any sphere elevated by means of slave labour or the performance of machines. It results, rather, in the determination of the common conditions for a personal realization that returns to natural and social necessity, assuming its return as the self-movement in which it itself takes place. As it happens, such a realization presupposes the full integration of the particular and its reciprocity with the common, i.e., the political dimension of social activity.

The verb "to manage" corresponds to "*gestionar*" in Spanish and to "*gérer*" in French. By their Latin root, these terms refer to "begetting" and "producing" certain fruits such as those produced by the earth

("*gerere*") and more broadly to "carrying something with oneself" (also in "*gestāre*" as the most frequent usage). The nominal variety of this term ("*gestatio*") refers to the "action of carrying," a sense that several languages—including English and Romance languages—use for naming the processes of generation of life ("gestation," in English) (cf. del Aguila, 2016b). Well, the need of political power for the management of the common can be examined around the question: What organicity would make feasible *to manage* or *gestate* the dialectic between human capacities and human needs? This can best be determined in terms of the *possibility of resolving* the antagonisms resulting from this new social being installed in a particular, individual, and collective freedom; a freedom lived in community and from the personal difference and the finitude of its productive possibilities.

The *political management of the common*, which our characterization of Marxian communism deems necessary, would manifest itself even in the representation of the dualism of realms we have criticized. In Section Five of *Capital I*, the use of the productive force of labour to emancipate man from natural needs (subsistence) in communism is posed via the "the generalisation of the labour" (*Capital I*, pp. 531–532)[17] that takes care of them and distributing it uniformly among the associated producers (cf. *Capital I*, pp. 530–531). Still, it is remarkable that—in line with our reading of communism as a society of free and (mutually) *different* individuals—uniformity remains reserved for the activity of labour as "realm of necessity." All this, of course, on the understanding that *properly free* activity would be disposed according to the non-uniformizable creative interests of each individual.

In the context of the interconnection between the determinations of absolute surplus value (working day) and relative surplus value (intensity of labour and development of productive force), the dualism of realms is proposed in this section of *Capital I* around the radical reduction of necessary labour in a communist society. This proposal interests us because it is preceded by the assertion that working time would be shortened to necessary labour once the capitalist appropriation of surplus time has been sublated (cf. *Capital I*, p. 530). Immediately, however, we enter an uncertain terrain. In reality, surplus labour cannot disappear given

[17] In the French version revised by Marx, the same quote reads "la généralisation du travail *manuel*" (Marx, 1872, p. 228, my emphasis). The addition of "manual" is not exactly a *detail*.

the requirements of the social reserve fund and the accumulation that makes feasible the progressive increase of productivity in this society (cf. *Capital I*, p. 530). Moreover, Marx outlines, favorably to our proposal to *link* freedom and necessity, some sort of resignification—more precise than in the classic quote on the dualism of realms—of necessary labour: the expansion of "its limits … because the notion of 'means of subsistence' would considerably expand, and the labourer would lay claim to … altogether different [vital aspirations]" (cf. *Capital I*, p. 530).

With this, a step is taken toward formulating the dialectical articulations between capacities and needs that would allow for the realization of a humanly emancipated life. This, specifically, through the recognition that subsistence needs themselves would have to be permanently redefined, since "the richest conditions of the worker's life" presuppose equally renewed material preconditions for their satisfaction. It is a promising approach because the expansion of the limits of necessity is introduced in relation to the constantly renewed "vital aspirations" of the associated producers and these refer in Marx to something more than subsistence: self-realization. But the self-completion dynamism between capacities and needs is not consummated: the *link* between the realms that would allow us to think the return—which we have been pursuing—of freedom over necessity is not achieved. We are facing an unexplored opportunity of theoretical development that presents as self-realization the productive activity itself: the activity that satisfies both the enriched requirements of the constantly renewed "life conditions of the worker" ("realm of necessity") and his "vital aspirations" ("realm of freedom").

In any case, the Marxian affirmation of the (at least quantitative) dynamism of the "realm of necessity" ("expansion of its limits") brings us back to the individual and collective commitments of the associated producers with respect to necessary labour and its satisfaction regarding the requirements of the "realm of freedom." To resolve this question spontaneously—disregarding the political dimension of human activity—so that the productive system efficaciously serves the deployment of the personality of particular subjects, again presupposes the harmony of individual and collective wills as well as the technical infinitude of the human potentials.

This bet for spontaneity has to be set aside when we discard the presumptions about the harmony of wills and the unrestricted power attributed to technique. Thus, the satisfaction of one or the other realm cannot but pose a structure of social conflict that is permanently spurred

on. In accordance with Marx's modern imprint of progress, the needs of personal realization constitute an increasingly expanding spiral. In turn, these needs carry with them the redefinition of the needs of subsistence. The expansion of the human capacities required for satisfying the "realm of freedom" would suppose the respective expansion of the basic requirements of the material and physiological reproduction of human beings. It suffices, then, only with the discreetly quantitative feedback of "the free" on "the necessary" in terms of the expansion of the satisfiers that necessary labour could and should produce—by the elimination of the capitalist form of production—to problematize the social viability of the communist mode of production. Again, we are confronted with the inevitability of social antagonism and the necessity of its management in political terms: particular subjects will claim for themselves *more than what is necessary in order to realize the free*.[18]

Now, the problem at hand goes beyond the relative simplicity of solving the requirements of subsistence via the expected post-capitalist "springs of common wealth" (cf. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87); requirements that are constantly renewed and expanded, but in the end, circumscribed to the "realm of necessity." The challenge would have a greater scope: to viabilize the convergence of richly cultivated individualities that invest their will in "much more than eating and dressing," placing it around their creative dispositions, i.e., their "higher" goals (cf. Heller, 1976, pp. 129–130). In a culture disposed toward the promotion of personal realization, this would involve strong claims and not exactly easy to abandon; in the way that one plate of food might be exchanged for another to satiate some elementary requirement that is deemed as *inferior* according to the dualism of realms.

Conflicts would thus take on a more fundamental character—from the viewpoint of human aspirations—that, by definition, will not refer to matters that can be easily transacted or contingently set aside by immediacy or caprice. In the case of the "realm of necessity," on the other hand, several circumstances could invite the indifference to our own activities. First, one where the time devoted to our activities becomes trivial due to the shortening of the working day. Second, that where the content

[18] Even for the "realm of necessity," Stedman Jones argues that the mere determination of the labour time for the satisfaction of needs in communism would impose the mechanisms of right and government in the distribution of the burden of communal activity among individuals (cf. 2002, pp. 178–179).

of productive labour becomes unimportant to the producer, not being in itself a space for self-realization. Finally, that his subsistence would be secured regardless of his contribution to the common: like a communist substitute of the guarantees to individual subsistence—e.g., social security and the welfare State—already known in the most advanced capitalism. By definition, such an indifference would have no place in the "realm of freedom."[19]

Well then, if conflicts are to arise around what really matters, the *ends in themselves* that would inhabit the "realm of freedom," the question arises: Is it rational to expect that the abandonment of political activity will not permanently affect the joint viability of communist society? Among the positive determinations that the dualism of realms prevents us from assuming, we find—in addition to the articulation of needs and capacities we dealt with a moment ago—the very sense of totality where the political dimension takes place. It is not surprising, then, that the necessity of this dimension is more imperious in our proposal to link necessity and freedom than in the dualism of realms we are criticizing.

In this framework, the redefinition of the necessary would be much more than a merely quantitative issue, being resolved as an opening from the freedom inscribed in the diversity of the associated producers. According to our approach, all needs—including those of the "realm of freedom"—require a determinate material support that must be managed from the human difference and finitude, as well as from the antagonism resulting from these. Therefore, the satisfaction of the ensemble of human needs requires not only to deal with the communist technical-productive design, but also with its foundation: the freely associated wills that are to decide on the valuations, orientations, and priorities that will define such a design. It is a non-technical level that rises above the technical to give it meaning and structure. The dualism we confront fails to do justice to this fundamental issue: the management of the common can never be a technical matter, not even in the persistent "realm of necessity."

* * *

What can we say about the Marxian representation of communism in relation to the foundational conceptions of liberal political philosophy? The

[19] For the way in which, from Deleuze, such an indifference is impossible in terms of the place of politics for Marxian communism, cf. Thoburn (2003, Chapters 5–6).

first thing we can notice is that this representation of communism is more in tune with the ideas of John Locke than with those of Thomas Hobbes. This may sound paradoxical to those who are attentive to the Marxian vindications—which have been qualified in due course—on revolutionary violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat, given the classic classical shape of the Hobbesian *Leviathan*. The greater proximity to Locke refers to the *premises* which, in Marx's teleological bet, would give meaning to such vindications: the emergence of a communist society *free from* the political forms of social domination.

If we pay heed to the iusnaturalist sources of liberalism's sense of the common—i.e., "state of nature" and "natural right"—we can appreciate a convergence with some of Marx's anthropological postulations. Primitive communism evokes the Lockean natural condition as a form of life in common in which human beings lived in harmony without the *corruption* of crime: that practical disposition of an individual who, irrationally, decides to go against "the law of nature" (Locke, 1690, § 8). Crime is—for Locke—an anomaly that breaks the original unity of the humankind. In Marx's philosophy of history, this breach of the common corresponds to the emergence of private property of the means of production. In John Locke's proposal, the breach is repaired through punishment and, finally, by constituting a "political society" (1690, § 77 ff.) that never fails to enforce the rights of the individuals against the State. The Marxian solution, on the other hand, aims at a greater radicality, for it addresses the root that engenders crime through the social unfoldments of our species. It confronts, then, the very structures that throw the deployment of the particular toward the negation of the common and, in this way, strikes against the pattern that would have deployed this alienation. This pattern is none other than the private property of the means of production, as well as all the relations and the institutionalism that operates from its needs of reproduction.

Beyond this fundamental difference between the two authors, one cannot fail to appreciate the aforementioned attunement. For both Locke and Marx, political mediation is in itself problematic, even undesirable. In Locke's case, political society is the "necessary evil" to which individuals must submit, but under certain not minor restrictions (cf. Locke, 1690, Chapter XIII)—such as the right of sedition—that were absolutely foreign to Hobbes' absolutist approach. For its part, if communism—as proposed by Marx—is to historically resolve the breach of the community lost by the dissociation between producers, it must consequently effect a social

life that no longer requires the mediations previously necessary to dominate human beings through private property. Being "political society" a fundamental mediation for the various historically known forms of domination, communism must be affirmed, therefore, outside of anything that could lead us to this dimension. Politics, the public, the State, and its substitutes are regarded as the artificiality whose instrumental mediation could now be abandoned as a negation of the original human nature. In turn, this condition could be recovered in a variety that, unlike primitive communism, would allow for a widespread deployment of individuality, which constitutes the best legacy of "natural history," specifically of capitalist society.

Thomas Hobbes, for his part, had depicted a different "state of nature," marked by incessant antagonism and the "warre of every man against every man" 1651, 85). His crude and pessimistic conception of the human being led him to favor a political solution different from Locke's, that of a monolithic "civil state" with the power to contain the "indeterminate appetence" of human beings (cf. del Aguila, 2016b, pp. 35–51); an appetence that could not be contained by mere scrupulosity or by purely instrumental readings of the risks of assuming antagonism and its violence. Hobbes argues that, to cope with this appetite, a socially all-embracing power is needed that overrides any opposing individual or collective power, so that it can be effectively asserted: the Leviathan (cf. 1651, pt. II).

Mediation, then, is not in itself problematic for Hobbes, but an inescapable necessity for the fate of individuals. The affirmation of the antagonistic dimension of human existence is inescapable for him. His work does not concede one iota to the self-indulgent idealizations by which the utopianisms that preceded and succeeded him represented a *locus communis*. All this, even from his poor homogenization of the human interests—a feature inherent to liberalism from its beginnings—that makes individuals dispute among themselves for desiring "the same" (cf. 1651, p. 95). The Hobbesian solution to this circumstance is liberal, although authoritarian. It is liberal because it is based on the anthropological primacy of individuation and individual freedom, on abstract equality among human beings, and on the perspective of political power as a "necessary evil." It is authoritarian because of the all well known features of the Leviathan. Nevertheless, his gaze attentive to human passions revealed to him a concrete sense of social antagonism that is missing in Marx's communism.

In more than one place, the work that summons us here has attacked utopian idealizations: "Nothing is more tedious and dull than the fantasies of *locus communis*" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 18). But the scene that the Marxian representation of communism leaves us with in the end is precisely that of a *locus communis* submitted to spontaneous courses of unpredictability and lack of conscious control. Here, no justice is done to central aspects of the personality and activity of the humanly emancipated individuals, such as their reciprocal difference in anthropological terms and their ontological inscription in finitude. Specifically, the necessity that these determinations justify for thinking communism is not addressed: that of glimpsing at least the conditions that would allow us to structure the constantly renewed dialectic between human capacities and human needs.

Marx's refusal to politically problematize the communist circumstance is thus closer to Locke's liberalism than to Hobbes'. It is needless to insist on the profound differences between Marx's and Locke's conceptions of freedom and the life in common. (For example, while Locke assumes the spontaneous harmony among particular subjects by a pretension of universal reason that is the guideline of their will and freedom, Marx devastates any shape prone to a rationality not conditioned by its historical belonging.) At the end of the day, just as in Locke's iusnaturalist paths, Marx's communism does not problematize human will in its richness, abysses, and antagonisms (cf. Stedman Jones, 2002, pp. 164–174). Above all, the presumption of a *natural harmony* whereby we would rely on a technical solution to human affairs expressed in communist superabundance ends up prevailing. To a large extent, this is what is meant by the Marxian invocation to abandon the need for political power in communist society.

In the Lockean "state of nature," everyone can take anything on the face of the earth (property) given the premises that there will always be something available for the other (Locke, 1690, §§ 30, 32 passim). It is a gaze submitted to the illusion of infinitude: that of the resources available for appropriation by each and every individual. In Marx's case, the limits that may arise for the effective expansion of needs would be *technically surmountable*, thus reaffirming the disposition toward unlimited wealth: an unlimitedness that is only possible insofar the will of particular subjects be disposed in non-antagonistic terms. Otherwise, someone could confront the community and say: "I want this or that appropriation, necessary for my personal realization, even if it means affecting, damaging or sacrificing some individual and/or collective interest other

than my own." This supposes a problem if we reflect on what would be the characteristic individuality of a communist culture. It would be—we argue—an individuality historically inherited from the achievements of capitalist industry and which, as a consequence, would in principle be disposed toward infinitude. In that culture committed to the personal self-realization of this individuality, no productivity could ever resolve the confrontation presented above.

The potentially infinite bets of particular subjects force us to reconsider finitude and its widest recognition. In the dualism of realms we discussed, the productive delirium of capital would know a communist variety in which the natural limits imposed on any technique are not recognized from the outset, nor is the confrontation between emancipated particular wills, whether individual or collective. From this follows the political *necessity* to assume the *human finitude* from the relation between the diversity of particular aspirations, on the one hand, and the appropriation of natural resources and socially produced wealth, on the other.

The intended material infinitude cannot be taken without further ado as a sufficient condition for perfect particular satisfaction. There will always be the others, as individuals or collectivities, to establish their own positive bets, potentially not harmonious with those of their fellows. We cannot presume that there are enough hills for all human beings to be able to abstain from the hills of the others, assuring their satisfaction and impregnability.[20] Some interest may emerge wanting and even needing all the existing hills for some determinate end. The allegory of the hill to which each individual could retreat helps us recognize a serious deficiency of Marx's communism: the *disproportionate autonomization of the activity of particular subjects*. This activity is autonomized: (a) with respect to the other particular subject (and the contribution of his or her capacities) as the harmony of wills would occur spontaneously and without bonding with him or her; (b) consequently, with respect to the life in common in its political sense and shaping; and (c) with respect to the human products resulting from the common activity and which would be presented as a mere externality to the particular subject who is to consume them (cf. del Aguila, 2011, pp. 33–38).

[20] I thank Professor Guillermo Rochabrún for this image about Marxian communism, which was presented some decades ago in his course "Sociological Theory II" at the School of Social Sciences of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

For all this, the representation of communism as a society in which the political dimension of human activity disappears is—in our estimation—the *liberal moment* in Marx's work. It is a moment inattentive to the management of the common or to the communal belongings from which individual freedom is realized—that is, provided the latter can return to the former. Here overflows the early renaissance—later enlightened—confidence in a fundamental harmony by which technique, given the lack of problematization of human ends, is deceitfully held as the resource that *resolves it all by itself*.

We can make use of Maguire's distinction between bourgeois "root" and "ground" to think the relation between "economic power" and "political power" in the analysis of the—problematic and barely sketched—Marxian theory of the forms of the State in bourgeois society (cf. Maguire, 1978, pp. 203–204). For our problem, the problem of communism, the necessity of politics is established by the *communal ground* where interindividual and collective difference converge; a difference that will not be spontaneously resolved by some technical miracle that supplies it all. In this way, politics could not be *rooted* out, but it would have to be reworked from the constantly renewed ground of a life in common that—when the time comes—will require its mediation.

As a practically emancipated and self-conscious society, Marxian communism should not be represented as a non-antagonistic society where the social conditions for the reproduction of interindividual and inter-collective conflicts have been extinguished. It would be fatal to the communist enterprise if its sense of the common were analogous to some variety of liberal iusnaturalism in which individuals—*free from* political power—were detached from each other, as well as from their own instruments, submitted to them as mere *things*. In this scenario, the future classless society would dispense with the broad division of labour in the manner of primitive societies which, by the same token, also dispensed with the political dimension of their activity. Thus, and in spite of all the historical mediations that would lead us to post-capitalist communism, a peculiar Marxian "state of nature" appears again under this representation.

The perspective of "total emancipation" would be at this point interpretable as the return to a certain originality that, not being missed, is even disdained by Marx's modern sense of progress. This originality would end up returning precisely when we opened the door that was to

lead us further than ever from the primitive community and its elementary harmonies. From this unexpectedly *backward loop*, social history would be rebooted in the expected variety of a "human history." This history should be so characterized, for it could promote neither the self-realization of individuals, nor the development of the collectivities and the communal life they form.

On the contrary, we must assume the anthropological irreducibility and social necessity of antagonism. So must be, at least, if we think communism as a form of organization radically humanized in the unity of a species that (a) is related to the finite whole of the social needs and capacities, and (b) assumes the differences to be determined by the historically situated wills of individuals emancipated from capitalist private property. From the anthropological and historical-social premises that we have identified in his work, we can situate *Marx against Marx* to argue that the communism he envisioned would only be feasible if we maintain the necessity of the political dimension of praxis; from which we will be well equipped to deal with this dialectical complexity.

The contrary perspective shapes a peculiar scene where certain germinal varieties of liberalism—such as Hobbes'—reveal a greater practical sense than Marx's own philosophy and his radical sense of historicity. While in *Leviathan* political power cannot disappear while we are who we are, i.e., modern individuals, Marxian communism ends up idealizing either the harmonic potential of individuals or the resources of productive technique. All this, to a large extent, without paying close attention to what Marx himself celebrated as the purpose of all his work: the development of the concrete freedom of individuals conceived as *real persons*. Such persons, in the end, "are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity" (*The German Ideology*, p. 31).

Toward a representation on the political requirements of personal freedom in a Marxist-style communist society, we can attend to the following considerations of Marx himself on the social conditions of crime, education, and their relation to work. The matter refers to the "root of the human," expressed in the interests of individuals. Since—as we have argued—these interests reflect the constant evolution of the social needs of subsistence and self-realization, their content will always remain to be defined, or at least will never be arranged as a definitive determination. In *The Holy Family* (in Marx & Engels, 1975) of 1845, following

French materialism and its relation to contemporary socialist and communist positions, Marx refers to a "correctly understood interest," "principle of all morality," which is asserted insofar as what matters is that "man's private interest must be made to coincide with the interest of humanity" (*The Holy Family*, p. 130–131). What a problem this statement leaves us to cope with the challenges related to the viability of a sociality of richly differentiated individuals. In a humanly emancipated society, the educational and social conditions would allow the development of the needs and capacities of the associated producers, as well as the satisfaction of their interests. All of this, especially in attention to the practical organization of the coincidence between the particular and the common, which here is presumed to happen or is simply established as necessary.

But the "correctly understood" terms of the human interest can be, precisely, *quite problematic* if we are dealing with effectively individual, i.e., personal, interests. At least regarding the penalties for crime, Marx gives a hint from the contraposition with the negative formality where freedom resides under the homogenizing horizon of bourgeois right:

> If man is [free] in the materialistic sense, i.e., is free not through the negative power to avoid this or that, but through the positive power to assert his true individuality, crime must not be punished in the individual, but the anti-social sources of crime must be destroyed, and each man must be given social scope for the vital manifestation of his being. (*The Holy Family*, p. 131)

The vindication of the human interest presupposes the assertion of the positive capacity to deploy a certain individuality that is free, not according to a *general concession of rights*, but to its *practical conditions of realization*. This implies the link of the free individuality with the common interest: "If man is shaped by environment, his environment must be made human" (*The Holy Family*, p. 131). Under the communist horizon whereby "the human" presupposes the belonging to "the common," the power of individuality to realize itself—that is, to be free—will result from the power of the society it belongs to for asserting such a realization as the organizing principle of communal existence (cf. *The Holy Family*, p. 131).

The Marxian horizon—here presented from its materialistic sources in *The Holy Family*—finds itself committed to the centrality of education,

the communion between the particular and the common, and the positivity of freedom: the disposition of conditions for a certain exercise of power for the realization of the human interests. It is also defined in open opposition to modern social life; a social life that is devoted to the horizon of having, selfishness, and externalization toward the sense of the common, and that is politically expressed in the abstract mediations established by modern citizenship. In this context, the maxim "destroy the antisocial roots of crime" is stated, although the void becomes notorious, and a positive reflection remains pending on the structuring and organization of that social power that would make feasible the human realizations. What is at stake, to a large extent, is the decision to *address the need of power for viabilizing freedom*. Such a decision could not be based on gratuitous presumptions of harmony between the individual and the social, at least if we depart from the rich personality cultivated by individuals in communism and its potential antagonisms.

A similar situation is presented in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* apropos of the relation between education and labour. Marx's commentary on child labour in the Fourth Section of the *Programme* is of great interest. Aside from the imprecision of the *Gotha Programme* regarding the age limit for child labour, our author sentences the unfeasibility of restricting child labour in the framework of large-scale industry: "A *general prohibition* of child labour is incompatible with the existence of large-scale industry and hence an empty, pious wish" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 98). He then—and this may powerfully draw attention—stresses that, if it were feasible, it would be a *reactionary* cause, given its lack of awareness that "an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 98). The productive activity of children would be perfectly in line with a socialist program—suggests Marx—provided "a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other precautionary stipulations for the protection of children" are in force (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 98).

Throughout his life, Marx severely denounced the capitalist exploitation of child labour. *Capital* contains emblematic pages of this widely

documented denunciation.[21] Nevertheless, he does not agree with the—typically liberal—essentialization of the "child condition" that abstracts away it from its concrete determinations and conceives it as absolutely clean of any relation with the domain of labour. On the contrary, Marx considers the potential of a non-alienated child labour that is properly regulated and associated with the development of talents cultivated through education. The logic of capital instrumentalized child labour for its ends with few qualms. Social conflicts—including the class struggles that Marx both researched and promoted—contained, at least partially, this reifying employment of children, achieving decisive restrictions on the exploitation of their labour power. Thus, capital has been adapting to the progressive—and still very distant in the twenty-first century—abolition of child wage labour that it previously practiced without blushing.

But in this document, it is Marx himself who, faced with the permanently revolutionary character (*in crescendo* of innovation and productivity) that defines capitalist relations of production, considers the question from another perspective. Marx hails the potential of child labour, properly regulated and associated with the education of those who will be socialized into a society of free and (mutually) different individuals. From this formation, they would contribute to the productive force—managed through the common property of the means of production—and to social wealth according to their particular capacities. Likewise, they would demand the satisfiers required for their personal growth and development, according to their own particular needs. *Capital* also states this perspective:

> From the Factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing *fully developed* human beings. (*Capital I*, p. 486, my emphasis)

[21] Cf., for example, Section 3.a ("Appropriation of Supplementary Labour Power by Capital. The Employment of Women and Children") of Chapter XV, of *Capital I* (pp. 398–405).

The use of child labour for human emancipation—raised by Marx against a *Gotha Programme* that ended up being vague and reactionary—brings us back to the need for political power in communist society. The basis of this power will no longer be class distinction, but a more radical diversity; one coming from individuals at last in a position to decide as such, according to *their own aspirations*. Only in the delusion of technical superabundance and monochord consensus of wills could we conceive that such a diversity would not engender new forms of social conflicts requiring new mediations that concern the emancipated society as a whole; that is, requiring the political dimension of praxis.

What, then, will be the age limit for the productive use of education and child labour? What would be the thematic and pedagogical orientations and regulations of these activities? What will be their scope, for example, in terms of learning spaces without immediate productive-instrumental concurrence (play, contemplation, art, etc.)? Or, more broadly, how would the productive be defined for students in a society that consummates the reconciliation of humanity with Nature, at the same time as that of the human being with itself as animal-being and species-being? Undoubtedly, many other valuational questions could be raised, but none solvable by technique alone.

In accordance with what has been expounded, technique finds its own *social condition of possibility* in the cultivation of personal richness. On the one hand, because the development of capacities reverts on the means that make possible the satisfaction of needs. Thus, the deployment of the activity of scientists and artists in the mode of self-realization would revert on the communities that attend to "basic needs" of education in a society that would permanently expand the domain of "the necessary." On the other hand, because it is the decisions of persons—human valuations, after all—what defines the general strategic horizon and the meaning of the procedures of the technical administration of resources. In a communist society, these decisions would be made by all those responsible for the development of the productive forces and their expected superabundance; that is, by all the associated producers, the same who will establish the terms on which their children have to be educated.

In the perspective of the dualism of realms, these kinds of issues (which could be addressed from disparate and free perspectives in a communist society) are expected to be resolved without a political dimension where the common character of the decisions that *concern and bind us all* becomes effective. The homogenizing fetishisms of capitalist

sociality, with its plague of ideological normalizations, would no longer take place. Instead, we could expect the consequent conscious disclosure of the various potentially competing individual and collective interests. However, the perspective of spontaneity dominates the scene of Marxian communism. It is a disposition, on this point, compatible with the utopianism of Saint-Simon, Fourier or Owen, hailed and criticized in the *Communist Manifesto.* On the one hand, they are hailed, because:

> They attack every principle of existing society. … The practical measures proposed in them—such as the abolition of the distinction between town and country, of the family, of the carrying on of industries for the account of private individuals, and of the wage system, the *proclamation of social harmony*, the conversion of the functions of the State into a mere superintendence of production, all these proposals point solely to the disappearance of class antagonisms. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 516, my emphasis)

It is worth noting here, for the last time, the recurrence to celebrate the reduction of politics to a mere technique or a simple administrative *means*. Well then, on the other hand, they are criticized, since:

> Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class organisation of the proletariat to an organisation of society specially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans. (*Communist Manifesto*, p. 515)

The *link* between human capacities and human needs—such as the one we have proposed—requires positively advancing beyond the critical-negative value of the utopians who also inspired Marx's work. Thus, "the historical conditions of emancipation," as conditions positively *placed* by human activity as a whole or *political conditions for managing the common*, demand the central place that corresponds to a proposal for social transformation that starts from the (mutual) difference and finitude of "man himself."

The final suggestion that summons us is to think with Marx and against him—if the case may be—the conditions for the realization of a society humanly emancipated from capital, so as not to remain in the naive "social plans" criticized above. According to the Marxian critique, the members

of capitalist society do not know the harmony between the particular and the common intended by its various forms of social and political domination and homogenization. Subjected by capital and its vast resources, they did know the forced harmonization of their differences within the class-based social structures that organize and subdue them. The symptoms of this circumstance have been multiple: from revolutionary critique and political reform to simple individual malaise, not to mention nihilism and the vast psychopathy of the optimizing and consumerist life of our days.

Not only the "Procrustean bed" of capital, but also pre-modern societies have not been able to consummate the entelechy of such harmonization. That being the case, why should it be presupposed in the course of a society that, once individuals cease to exist subdued to class membership, would uncover and enrich their personality in an unprecedented way? Being formed by freely associated individuals who would establish relationships among themselves on the basis of reciprocally disclosed interests, communist society would lack the previous homogenizing mechanisms and their ideological mediations. Moreover, the mere existence of this society of free and (mutually) different individuals would be the touch of death for those mechanisms of homogenization contrary to a humanity effectively committed to the personal realization of its members. Thus, the presumption of harmony between the individual and collective wills of a humanly emancipated society must be abandoned, lest we fall into the naivety of revolutionary horizons and designs that do not think the factual conditions of their feasibility.

The anthropological and historical-philosophical presumptions on the harmony between individuals and collectivities in the horizon of emancipation reveal themselves as essential to Marx's work. Not always visible, they end up resolutely asserting themselves to incapacitate the whole of his communist bet: fulfill the existence of a community of free and (mutually) different individuals. They proceed on the assumption that, once class domination is eradicated, the human antagonisms that affect social life as a whole will be equally canceled. No more antagonism, no more mediations in the name of freedom, no more history, no more politics. Political power, finally, appears as a merely instrumental artifice and mediation to be abandoned in the name of human emancipation. This is the backdrop of modern political philosophy that associates our author with his liberal neighbors: the dominant negative conception and valuation of the political dimension of human activity. In our hypothesis, this

perspective prevents political power from being thought of, from Marx, as an active and positive human force for the viabilization of the diverse and not always compatible interests and endeavors of the concrete individuals who would form a communist society, in accordance with the *principle of different right*: "¡From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, p. 87; cf. our Chapter 2).

Liberal political citizenship was early criticized by Marx because of its abstract exercise of representing the species-man (*citoyen*) as legitimizing the selfish man (*bourgeois*) (cf. *On the Jewish Question*, in Marx, 1975c). The latter found in the former the juridical-political regulations that viabilized his way of social coexistence and all his estrangement. This was the horizon of political emancipation. However, the cost of this criticism in favor of human emancipation was high: the abandonment of the reflection on the political mediations necessary to viabilize the reciprocal convergence of the individual and collective interests; the surrender to "spontaneous solutions." This is perhaps no less radical an abstraction than the previous one. By virtue of it, we disregard the exercise of power that concerns the *life in common* when (a) we think the human achievements and, more fundamentally, when (b) we address the inescapable relationship between the particular and the common Marxian criticism was so interested in reconciling.

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CHAPTER 5

Communism From Marx and Beyond Marx

Our exposition has assumed some fundamental elements of the critique of political economy undertaken by Marx. Thus, we have affirmed that capitalist society is based on the predominance of certain social relations by which, in the life in common, the interest of its producers loses priority to the estranged interest of the accumulation of capital. The critique of modern political citizenship based on Marx's early critique of civil society was enriched and strengthened as he developed his critique of political economy. Indeed, Marx's confrontation with the abstract dispositions from which liberal citizenship is installed as the formal-negative horizon of the life in common (political emancipation) is rooted in the critique of capitalist relations of production and their power to constitute the institutionalism of political power in modern societies. In this context, the liberal vindications of individual freedom and universal equality constitute a powerful ideological register by which the capitalist mode of production is legitimized as a natural form *of organization* in the face of the diversity of human interests subjected by it.

Faced with this alienated form of social existence, Marx's positive bets transcend the horizon of critique. It even has a way of understanding the social revolution—which we have not properly dealt with here. But it also has a horizon of community that sublates liberal political emancipation and the guarantee of citizen rights that are consistent with

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capitalist domination. This horizon is communism. It emerges as a result of the conditions and historical dynamism of the society that precedes it: capitalist society. At the same time, it constitutes a *society of free and* (*mutually*) *different individuals* who would organize the terms of a new community centered on the supreme interest of the personal realization of its members. In this way, it is defined as voluntary and conscious co-management of the social dialectic between the needs and capacities of the associated producers. This management would come from the inherited historical wealth, while it would be disposed to progressively expand it and diversify it. In this scene, the law of value would no longer prevail. Labour would no longer be organized around the guidelines of independent private producers (private labour). *Free time* would become the sense of productive efficiency and no longer the satisfaction of the general formula M-C-M' of capital. In turn, the common property of the means of production would be the decisive determination to make this new organicity a reality (cf. Booth, 1989).

The dualistic orientations of Marx's thought entailed vast negations in his representation of the humanly emancipated society that not simply posed the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of certain preceding social relations but directly their abolition (*Abschaffung*). Among other dimensions on which the Marxian logic of abolition applies, such as the notion of *ideology*, we have problematized the *abandonment of the political dimension of social activity* for communist society. We have argued that this is in marked harmony with the anthropological presumptions of liberal political philosophy (cf. our Chapter 3). By virtue of this convergence, Marx would maintain that politics is an artificial dimension, perfectly dispensable wherever the roots of social conflict disappear; i.e., private property of the means of production and social classes. In such a scenario, the human species would be able to reconcile with itself, given the presumption of a certain spontaneous harmony between individuals and collectivities being part of this new society (cf. Walicki, 1995, p. 89 ff.). This harmony would become viable once "the anti-social sources of crime" (*The Holy Family*, p. 131, in Marx & Engels, 1975) are cancelled and the juridical-political mediations of social activity have been negated. Henceforth, the instrumental power of technique would take care of the minor impasses that might appear as exceptions under a master design that would resolve the fundamental requirements for a life in common realized in freedom.

Politics would be, for Marxian communism, a historical contingency that, although it arose in a certain episode of the development of

humanity, its contribution would no longer be relevant to the realization of the human interests. Our critique develops from the motive of the dualism of realms presented in the third book of *Capital*: the dualism between a "realm of necessity" and a "realm of freedom". It is perhaps here where, most emblematically, the Marxian philosophy of history and its conception of human freedom could not completely sublate the dualistic horizons of philosophical modernity. In our judgment, the idealization of a freedom that proceeds *outside of* and without any *effective repercussion* on its *necessary conditions of reproduction*—that is, represented as a *point of arrival but not as a concrete and essential determination* for the total reproduction of a communist society—constitutes a serious setback for critical-emancipatory thought. It ends up shaping utopian dispositions that cannot face the achievements of the civilization of capital in the effective management of the social dialectic between human needs and capacities. Along these lines, we argue for the necessity of a *link* between the different capacities and needs that constitute the organizing determinations of the life in common. Such a task could not be left to spontaneity.

The clearest theoretical and practical expression of this problem is the bet for the abolition of politics in communism, or the renunciation to think the political terms of the life in common in a society finally emancipated from the class structures of social domination. It is, to a large extent, the renunciation to assume the richness of the human diversity resulting from the society of capital and its processes of individuation within the framework of the finitude that defines the reciprocal relationships between human beings, and between them and Nature. Both determinations, anthropological diversity and ontological finitude, outline a scene of potential antagonism that cannot be overlooked except from an idealizing perspective of the human condition.

The pending critical and propositional challenge would be, therefore, to address positively and concretely—that is, politically—this flow of ends and interests, and of powers and resources. We can identify them from Marx and his critique of capitalism, but we cannot think their viability within a humanly emancipated community given the liberal remnants of his thought. The *natural necessity* that had dominated in class societies—including that of the "invisible hand" of bourgeois society—would now know a refurbished variety, although no less detrimental to the interest of the voluntary and conscious government of the associated producers: the *communist technical design* (cf. Booth, 1989, p. 213 ff.).

We must now conclude this effort to criticize the Marxian notion of communism from Marx's own approach. Our ambition has been none other than to radicalize it and provide it with greater consistency. For this closing, we will dwell on some political analyses where Marx left some outlines of what a communist politicity could mean. What is more, we will propose to reread Marx's work attending to two dimensions of it whose sense of totality may enable us to think the place of the political in a humanly emancipated society: his philosophical anthropology and his political economy. In this line, we will present the suggestion of a *relational ontology* (cf. del Aguila, 2009), from which we seek (a) to rethink the Marxian conceptions on the social-historical and natural conditionality of our species, as well as (b) to revisit the sense of totality of the various dimensions of economy. This ontology will allow us to throw some clues for a rereading of the Marxian work that resituates the political dimension of human activity and its organizing power. Finally, we will attempt to identify some paths for a current agenda of reflection that can keep us in the unfinished and unavoidable emancipatory task of *thinking communism*.

5.1 Marxian Outlines for a Communist Politicity

Positive formulations on communism are scarce and fragmentary in Marx's work. Although the aspiration for a society emancipated from social domination constituted the *leitmotif* of his work, he devotes the bulk of it to the critique of capitalist society. Here is where his efforts were concentrated, and not so much on the characterization of the society that would result from a revolution against the private property of the means of production. We have therefore sought to reconstruct the Marxian representation of communism, dwelling on each of our restricted textual findings. We have tried, so to speak, to squeeze these writings to make the most of them and to delve into their possible interconnection for insights on what such a society would be in our philosopher's terms.

The resulting scene is necessarily insufficient. Not only for the reasons we have been arguing in pursuit of vindicating a communist politicity. Also, because the elements of departure that, with respect to communism, can be gathered in Marx's work are in themselves formally and materially unsatisfactory for determining *the* concept of communism of that work. All that remains is to outline a more or less coherent *representation* of it. The indeterminacy that dominates this scene suggests that a

hypothetical concept of communism in Marx, broadly developed, could have consummated profiles that we simply cannot to delineate with the insufficient existing material. We would have been pleased with a more extensive treatment, from Marx himself, of the determinations of the life in common that would result from the new requirements of production in a communist society. Of course, it could have resulted in a different concept from the Marxian representation we already have, but this is mere speculation in view of the material we effectively have available.

Nevertheless, in its limitation and fragmentary character, in Marx's work we find some positive guidelines about the terms of a communist organization of social life; in particular, with respect to a possible communist politicity. This material is of interest to the arguments we have been making and should be offered before concluding. Thus, we conclude the exposition of our findings and complete our itinerary by countering the void that we have previously identified (cf. our Chapter 4) on the place of politics in Marxian communism.

In the first place, Marx conferred a decisive importance to the political moment of social activity, since it defines the course of all forms of social organization:

> One day the worker will have to seize political supremacy to establish the new organisation of labour; he will have to overthrow the old policy which supports the old institutions if he wants to escape the fate of the early Christians who, neglecting and despising politics, never saw their kingdom on earth. (*On the Hague Congress*, p. 255, in Marx, 1988)

Only the social interest capable of taking political form can be realized; this is a sort of revolutionary presupposition with respect to which Marx is forceful. This is a necessity widely recognized by Marx. Nevertheless, it is not assumed to its full extent, since he considers that this recognized and wanted political power must, at a certain point, be destroyed and expelled from the human horizons.

In accordance with our vindication of a communist politicity, positively profiled against the order of social domination that we live and know, the question can be posed as follows: Where lies, in a communist society, the need for the political dimension of human activity as a *medium*—i.e., intermediation and living space—in which different social interests can be jointly and comprehensively made transparent and collated as distinct and potentially contraposed dispositions of the life in common? The social

conditions of Marxian communism propose highly complex terms of coexistence that would pose unprecedented challenges for the management of the human efforts. We would be facing a civilizing context in which the homogenization and alienation inherent to the logic of capital would give way to the dynamism of personal capacities and needs, diverse in themselves, which would be widely deployed after the liquidation of the obstacles known to the social forces of production in the previous modes of production. Knowing to what extent the synergistic articulation and promotion of such capacities and needs demands this *medium*—once capitalist private property over the means of production had disappeared—requires attending to the conditions set for the development of free individuality in terms of a self-realizing personality. That is, it presupposes considering the irreducibility of social conflicts, instead of a priori discarding them by appealing to some *pre-established harmony* destined to solve them; which is precisely how the liberal reasons when he pretends to solve the optimization and allocation of resources by appealing to the "invisible hand" of the market.

If we return to the political analyses written by Marx, we can identify some elements to address the question we would at least like to raise: What would a communist politicity be? The first point to note is the important attention given to the *national problem* throughout these analyses. Typically, Marx and his heirs have thought the nation in terms of the functional political superstructures that would be inherent to the development of the capitalist market—under a certain level of necessary spatial aggregation—once commodity-capitalist logic was demanding the sublation of the narrow feudal localism. This gaze attends to a determinacy that is undoubtedly key to understand the emergence of modern Nation-States. In contemporary eyes, instead, the scene of global capitalism has been dissolving the determinacy of the national. Nevertheless, this does not suppose the disappearance of ethnic, linguistic, or religious determinations as substantive elements that characterize the national problem, as they undoubtedly did in Marx's time. It would seem gratuitous to suppose that, in a communist society that has cancelled the social class conflict, these sources of identity would lose relevance without further ado. All the more so because these sources will remain available to be reconverted according to an individuality that will be able to assume them for its personal self-realization. From its liberal facet, the Marxian representation of communism opens the doors to a shape of sociality where all

belonging has been reduced to technical mediation. As we have argued, herein lies its utopianism.

Against this, it is interesting that both Marx and Engels regarded the substantive determinations of the national question as dimensions active and central for the European revolutionary possibilities they both witnessed. One can review, for example, the extensive treatment of the *Polish question* in "The Frankfurt Assembly Debates the Polish Question" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 337–381, in Marx, 1977), the consideration of *national hatred* in "German Foreign Policy and the Latest Events in Prague" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 212–215), the Marxian analysis of the shaping of national and supranational interests in "The Russian Note" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 307–313) or the contextualization of the European international wars around the Paris Commune (*The Civil War in France*, pp. 353–354, in Marx, 1986b). In these profuse analyses, the national question appears as an appreciable source of dispute for the diversity inherent to the various forms of this inescapable dimension of social activity: the production of collective identities. But, above all, they reveal the inherent conflict that characterizes them and makes the political dimension of social activity the inescapable place of their conflagration.

Another issue of interest for our purposes is *political centralization* and the development of the social forces of production. This issue was already addressed apropos of the German presence in Poland in the revolutionary juncture of 1848 (cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 339). It is also discussed more broadly in relation to the process of decomposition of feudalism resulting in the French bureaucratic and military organization via "the centralisation, but at the same time the extent, the attributes and the agents of governmental power" (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 185, in Marx, 1979). This process of centralization is presented as *immanent* to the evolution of societies, as "a powerful coefficient of social production" (*The Civil War in France*, p. 333), and cannot but be spurred on by each revolutionary force. Thus, in relation to the coalited interests of Legitimists and Orleanists in the revolution of 1848, Marx remarked:

> Finally, in its struggle against the revolution, the parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen, along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralisation of governmental power. All revolutions perfected this machine instead of breaking it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 186)

Marx's theory of revolution depicts the proletariat as perfectly inscribed in this process, to the point that its revolutionary struggles for governmental power and its centralization are for it a sort of purgatory (cf. *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 185; Poulantzas, 2000, p. 254 ff.). Well then, why should this process be expected to come to an end? Rather, in view of its ostensible contribution to the development of the productive forces, why would there not be the *Aufhebung* of the conformation of political centralizations in the name of freedom? Why stigmatize this process of centralization as an atonement or as a mere *instrument* in the socialist form of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why not better conceive it as a mediation that, submitted to the conscious will of the associated producers, would be at the service of human interests whose management would require more than ever an articulating dimension that deals with the co-dependence and reciprocal necessity of the associated producers, mobilized by the purpose of a radicalized freedom as a deployment of the *personality* of individuals (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 79 passim Marx & Engels, 1976) and their respective collectivities? With the abandonment of the political dimension of human activity—defenestrated as alienation per se—this recourse to centralization that responds to the development of the social forces of production is also lost for the cause of human interests.

However, despite this conceptual framework, in the first edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* we come across the following fragment on the possibility of a post-bureaucratic centralization:

> The demolition of the state machine will not endanger centralisation. Bureaucracy is only the low and brutal form of a centralisation that is still afflicted with its opposite, with feudalism. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 193, footnote *b*)

In the second edition of 1869, this fragment is replaced by the following:

> With the progressive undermining of small-holding property, the state structure erected upon it collapses. The centralisation of the [S]tate that modern society requires arises only on the ruins of the military-bureaucratic government machinery which was forged in opposition to feudalism. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 193)

These are complex writings since (a) they are part of an exposition of the structural limits of Bonapartism regarding its economic, social, political, and military sustenance coming from the landed peasants, but that also (b) contribute to the radical emancipatory cause of the proletariat. In virtue of the former, this sort of post-bureaucratic centralization would simply be a way of referring to the eventual collapse of Bonapartism. However, "demolition of the state machine" becomes equivalent to "demolition of the bureaucracy," and this is the "low and brutal form of a centralisation"; more precisely, the negation of the modern State that has emerged in opposition to political feudalism, but not—necessarily—the negation of centralization in itself. We have then that, in the face of feudalism, the bureaucratic-military machinery is erected, and in front of this, still a different state centralization.

From here one could think of a *bureaucratic collapse* that does not mean the absolute negation of centralization. Rather, the possibility would open up of a post-bureaucratic centralization, which would be a *determined negation*—that is, a sublation—of the bureaucratic centralization known to the modern State. This would be a post-bureaucratic centralization consonant with human emancipation, and not limited to mere political emancipation. According to analyses of Marxian political economy, centralization is fundamental in the proletarian efforts for the radical deployment of the productive forces (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 505, in Marx, 1986a). Likewise, if—in accordance with *The Eighteenth Brumaire*—the Second French Empire was built on the failure of the Second French Republic, then the "centralisation of the [S]tate that modern society requires" cannot mean a return to another unprecedented variety, liberal or parliamentary, of bourgeois domination. Even more so, considering the habitual references Marx made in these years—and especially in these pages—to the inevitability of the proletarian revolution.[1] This is why we can understand the "centralisation of the [S]tate that

[1] Later on, Marx will label Bonapartist imperialism as "the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent [bourgois] society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labour by capital" (*The Civil War in France*, p. 330, my emphasis).

modern society requires"—which rises above the ruins of the "military-bureaucratic government machinery"—as a feature of a society already revolutionized in proletarian terms.[2]

In this line, concerning the contrast that the Paris Commune will offer to bourgeois domination, Marx refers in *The Civil War in France* to the "over-centralization" of the State subject to this domination: "[t]he antagonism of the Commune against the State power has been mistaken for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralization" (*The Civil War in France*, p. 333). This supports the question and the reading we have been proposing in favor of a communist politicity; at this point, about the potential that a (non "over-")centralization would have for the emancipatory cause of the proletariat.

Now, what could a post-bureaucratic centralization be? For the time being, let us stress that it would be convergent with at least two key elements in our interpretation of Marx's communism: (a) the unprecedented development of productive forces subject to the management of freely associated producers, and (b) the sublation of the "natural division" of labour. This should be replaced by a division of labour that does not limit roles or fixed positions in the generation of social wealth—a key feature of bureaucracy. It could therefore be thought of—already beyond Marx, by the way—as a division of labour where *public functions* are part of the (a) deployment of personality (self-realization), or—in terms of the Marxian dualism of realms we have criticized—of (b) the delivery of "necessary labour" to the requirements of the management of the common by freely associated producers. All this, of course, insofar as such a political form would no longer be the split level that misrepresents the diversity of social interests for the sake of the unilaterality of the interest that responds to the owners of the means of production.

What, then, would be a political organization conducive to human emancipation? After the failure of the proletarian insurrection of June 1848, Marx calls for not despairing or abdicating in the struggle for democratic forms of a government favorable to emancipation:

[2] From the classic Marxist readings developed throughout the twentieth century, centralized planning appears basically as a mediation toward the self-management of the associated producers in the subsequent communist scene (cf. Selucky, 1974).

> Is the deep chasm which has opened at our feet to be allowed to mislead the democrats, to make us believe that the struggle over the form of the [government] is meaningless, illusory and futile?
>
> Only weak, cowardly minds can pose such a question. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 149)

In this line, albeit under the horizon of political emancipation and the revolutionary struggles to sublate it, he maintains:

> Collisions proceeding from the very conditions of bourgeois society must be fought out to the end, they cannot be conjured out of existence. The best form of [government] is that in which the social contradictions are not blurred, not arbitrarily—that is merely artificially, and therefore only seemingly—kept down. The best form of [government] is that in which these contradictions reach a stage of open struggle in the course of which they are resolved. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 149)

Precisely, the historical determinations from which Marx outlines his representation of communism would require forms of political organization where interindividual differences and differences between collectivities become reciprocally transparent. But not only in the framework of political emancipation or under a revolutionary anti-capitalist regime, but for that society which—according to our author—would be humanly emancipated. The social contradictions that occur in it would require a *medium* that avoids their palliation by the recourse to violence of a torn public force, which aims to suppress the struggles resulting from the free movement of human interests in order to finally assert some unilateral interest. On the contrary, political power would assume a different role: to viabilize the transparency of social, interindividual, and inter-collective antagonism, as well as its compatibility with the sustainable self-realization of the associated producers.

As we have argued, the orientation of the revolutionary processes has in Marx the sign of a *final solution* that liquidates and abolishes. In our opinion, and from an interpretation of also Marxian roots, the issue may be radicalized from the perspective of a politicity as a scenario that makes social conflicts visible and where they can take place, rather than for pretending some illusory liquidation of them. In this respect, the reasoning at play in Marx's work is the following: the maximum determination of "natural history" (dialectic in process) is followed by revolutionary voluntarism (emergence of an emancipatory *telos*) and a

sort of utopian indeterminacy in the "realm of freedom" (cancellation of the dialectic). For us, on the other hand, the need for a communist politicity—the understanding of this *medium*, of this "form of government"—is supported by the thesis that human conflicts have no way of disappearing. Even less so under the anthropological complexity that would correspond to a Marxian communism based on the historical shaping of a rich individuality.

To this end, the demand for an exercise of legality in accordance with the "living demands of society" is duly raised apropos of the role of the judges in the first trial against the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*:

> If existing laws enter into open contradiction to a newly achieved stage of social development, then it is up to you, gentlemen of the jury, to come between the dead behests of the law and the living demands of society. It is up to you then to anticipate legislation until it knows how to comply with social needs. This is the noblest attribute of the assize court. … You have only to interpret [law] in the sense of our time, our political rights, and our social needs. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 313–314)

A radically historical and non-bourgeois sense of justice is planted in this discourse, one that proposes the recognition of the inexhaustible demands of the particular interests that are always constituted from their permanent redefinition. From this perspective, the redefinition of the human interest should prevail over any legal dogmatics. Even more so if its crystallization expresses certain social interests that, even if they could do so in the past, would no longer bet for more precious human aspirations, which would end up demanding their displacement. This radically critical view of right was a source of inspiration to think the legal field from an approach different from that which presupposes its subordination to the ruling classes. In this way, the Theory of the Alternative Use of Law emerged in Italy in the early 1970s under a plurality of progressive approaches, where the Marxist theorist Umberto Cerroni stood out (cf. Barcellona, 1973).

Marx, for his part, conceived *revocation of office* as a political-legal demand, positive and specific, which could be consistent with an organization of the common in a humanly emancipated society. This is in keeping with the aforementioned attachment to the redefinition of human aspirations and with the historical necessity that political power and its juridical forms be subject to this condition. Faced with the open despotic

handling of the judiciary by the Prussian Crown at the juncture of 1848, Marx remarks:

> [The Convention] inaugurated the revolution by means of a decree *dismissing all officials*. Judges, too, are nothing but officials, as the above-mentioned courts have testified before the whole of Europe. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 197)

Hence, the revolution would just abandon any "*superstitious faith* in the *judiciary*" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 197). To a large extent, it is a matter of recognizing that the exercise of political power—be it reactionary or revolutionary, constitutional or unconstitutional—enforces certain social interests of a class character (cf. *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 203). We have seen that, in Marx, this means the condemnation of the political dimension of human activity to mere historical contingency. However, would there not be a radical differentiation of human interests, and a potential contrariety between them, in the form of the deployment of the personality of the associated producers under communism? Consequently, could these interests coexist—i.e., jointly reproduce themselves—without politically deciding and/or regulating the terms in which the management of the common would respond to them and to the conflicts that could result from the diversity of their content? Would an institution such as the *democratic revocation of public office* not be, *mutatis mutandis*, precisely one of the responses required by the life in common in an emancipated society of this nature?

Marx's pronouncement on the Paris Commune of 1871 decidedly allows for a privileged glimpse of some positive determinations of what—in his opinion—represented the first experience of a proletarian government in the history of mankind (cf. Gould, 1995, Chapter 5, especially p. 121 ff.).

> Its true secret was this. [The Commune] was essentially a working-class government, the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334)

It was a significant step in maturity with respect to the emancipatory horizons of the 1848 revolution:

> The direct antithesis to the Empire was the Commune. The cry of "Social Republic," with which the revolution of February was ushered in by the Paris proletariate, did but express a vague aspiration after a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class-rule, but class-rule itself. The Commune was the positive form of that Republic. (*The Civil War in France*, pp. 330–331)

It would be a form of government with no split between social force and political force[3] as well as devoid of the alienation and disorientation resulting from that split.[4] The integration between social force and political force operates here as the feedback that refers to the growing identity between political emancipation and human emancipation, or to the process by which the former—insofar as it responds to the interest of the proletariat—is consummated in the latter:

> The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334)

For an anarchist—or at least non-state—interpretation of the Paris Commune, we may consider Badiou's (2010, pp. 192 ff.). For him, the gap between the political forms of state organization and the possibility of a "political invention" aligned with the emancipatory interests championed by the Commune constituted the decisive condition for its failure as an *event* (cf. 2010, p. 217, 200 ff.). As it opened the doors to a politics not subject to state oppression, the Commune could not know the forms of centralization under which state coercion and domination are regularly organized. Because of this, it was not in a position to confront this form of organization that finally defeated it. Thus, the failure of the Commune was inevitable as it was a radical emancipatory bet against the logic of the State.

[3] "The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society." (*The Civil War in France*, p. 333)

[4] "The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which construed it in their favour, show that it was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all previous forms of government had been emphatically repressive." (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334)

It is, therefore, a bet for a rupture with the parliamentary and centralizing representations of "the left," which would constitute forms of appeasing the movement and that bring with them "betrayals" and "disloyalties" unavoidable in the state logic they are part of (cf. 2010, pp. 197–198). The death of the Commune is, then, a matter of coherence with its own being (cf. 2010, p. 224, 228, passim) or, ultimately, the possibility of creating an independent proletarian politics (cf. 2010, p. 225), which would be its contribution to the future (cf. 2010, p. 226). This proposal does not end up negating the organization of emancipatory forces, but proposes to rethink it in terms of a political discipline entirely independent of the State. This leaves us with the question of whether such a discipline intends to set aside the centralizing forces that—according to Marx himself—arise from the development of the productive forces in capitalist society and that pose—as we have argued—the need for their political management in the communist society that would succeed it.

Several specific measures of the Paris Commune are reviewed and praised in *The Civil War in France* (cf. pp. 330–333). Some of them were strongly marked by revolutionary pressures: for example, the suppression of the standing army and its replacement by the armed people, as well as the suppression of the political attributes of the police (its reduction to a mere instrument of the Central Government). Other measures were aimed, rather, at the generation of a new form of political organization: for example, universal suffrage for the election and revocation of all public officials (including judges, thus controlling their possible political dependence on the social forces that support them), the merger of the executive and legislative powers, the elimination of the private control of public functions, transparency in management[5], the homologation of the salaries of civil servants at the level of workers' salaries (thereby suppressing high dignitaries and the costs associated with them), as well as the separation between Church and State in the maintenance of religion with public funds and the implementation of a secular education (cf. Gilbert, 1991, pp. 189 ff.). Of course, there were also measures specifically aimed at the workers: for example, regarding the abolition of night labour, the prohibition of unjustified fines by employers—who were legislators, judges, and

[5] "But indeed the Commune did not pretend to infallibility, the invariable attribute of all governments of the old stamp. It published its doings and sayings, it initiated the public into all its shortcomings." (*The Civil War in France*, p. 340)

executors of wage cuts—as well as the handover of paralyzed companies to workers' associations (cf. *The Civil War in France*, p. 339).

Each of these measures must be evaluated, either as mere *transit solutions* toward the emancipatory consummation that concludes in the abolition of all political mediations, or as outlines of emancipated political forms corresponding to the "living demands" of a communist society. The second possibility becomes plausible regarding the rupture of the organizational model of the Paris Commune with the well-known splits between the social and the political, and between the countryside and the city. In fact, the Commune proclaimed itself as a model for the organization of the various industrial centers until it reached the rural villages of France: a model sustained by the self-administration of the producers. As a counterpart, a delegation structure from the villages to the National Assembly in Paris is intended, but under the condition—unprecedented in the history of parliamentarism—of the permanent revocability of the delegates, who would be instructed by their electors under imperative mandate (cf. *The Civil War in France*, p. 332; Leopold, 2007). National unity would thus be instituted, but no longer on the basis of an independent State:

> The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 332)

The amputation of the merely repressive organs of state power is the necessary consequence. The same can be said about the restitution of their legitimate functions to responsible servants through universal suffrage, which would constitute the *end of the usurpation* exerted by such a power. This democratic resource is appraised by Marx in a formulation that could even be curious for certain Marxist orthodoxy. This formulation, however, is but an expression of the dialectic by which he conceives human emancipation as a *reworking*—and not as a *mere abandonment*—of the social relations of production. In this way, Marx would attend to the new social conditionality that is to define communism. In effect, Marx appeals to the instrumental rationality of capital and associates it with the emancipatory valuation of universal suffrage:

> Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 333)

Under a pragmatic valuation, from a clear emancipatory horizon, a form of organization of the life in common is proposed where the prevalent pattern no longer be the private appropriation of the products of social labour. It would be, rather, the joint and democratic decision of *all* those concerned in "the course of business": the freely associated producers.[6] Well, for this pattern to prevail, the Paris Commune expresses the route of government in universal suffrage.

In the same sense, with respect to the rural-urban relation:

> The Communal Constitution brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the working men, the natural trustees of their interests. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 333)

The presumption here is that *local autonomy* be something more than a counterweight to a "now superseded, State power" (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334), at least in the sense of the centralist bourgeois State at the service of ruling classes. Of course, the solution to this tension or counterpoint—which Marx no longer presents as antagonism—between the countryside and the city, as a hierarchical relation between peasantry and working class, remains to be determined. After all, the Paris Commune was *still* a form of State that supposed the "natural division"

[6] In the variety of "empowered participatory governance" for the progress of contemporary democracies, Erik Olin Wright values Brazil's experience of participatory budgeting in the 1980s as one in which the benefits of political decisions being made jointly and democratically by *all* those concerned can be appreciated (cf. 2010, p. 109 ff.). Of course, the issue is problematic from Marx's perspective, since his reading of the proletarian government of the Paris Commune assumes a marked class-based viewpoint foreign to the Latin American experiences of participatory budgets referred to by Wright.

of labour, here expressed as a rural–urban division. Communism "properly so-called" would abolish this contradiction, once the *State form* (cf. Rochabrún, 2007, pp. 147–149) has finally expired to its full extent.

This expiration would be anticipated in the form of the important financial savings that the Commune achieved against the bourgeois administration, radicalizing *political emancipation* toward *human emancipation*. This is why it is affirmed:

> The Commune made that catch-word of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure—the standing army and State functionarism. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334)

Likewise, it assumed a democratic political form:

> Its very existence presupposed the non-existence of monarchy, which, in Europe at least, is the normal incumbrance and indispensable cloak of class-rule. It supplied the Republic with the basis of really democratic institutions. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334)

Although, finally, after praising this revolutionary politicity, Marx adds:

> But neither cheap government nor the "true Republic" was its ultimate aim; they were its mere concomitants. (*The Civil War in France*, p. 334)

Ultimately, the subordinate and contingent character of all political forms of management of the common as a function of the dynamics of social classes is stressed. In the end, all of them will have to disappear and any reflection on the matter will lose meaning or weight. His praise of the Paris Commune and its measures would surface as the praise of a *revolutionary tactic* that does not give way to a *communist strategy* that resolutely assumes the continuity of antagonism and confronts its political requirements: either to give an appropriate place to antagonism, or to find an always partial "solution" to it, once installed in the communist scene.

Had it been so assumed, recognizing the necessity of political mediation for the viability of human emancipation, the Paris Commune would be a *medium* of social antagonism rather than a mere instrument. It would carry in its midst the content to be realized: the interests of the freely associated producers, which would no longer respond to the tear between

their character of "private individuals" and "public individuals." Their confrontation would be constitutive of the management of the common as a political space of articulation between the particular and the common. A model of organization like that of the Paris Commune would be, rather, the space destined for the antagonistic elaboration of such interests. In this way, it would be taken in all its radicality from the beginning, from the very reflection on the political forms that are arranged as immediate negation of the bourgeois State and which then open up new possibilities for the political management of the common.

But not only politics was reified by Marx, as a *mere means*. So was, to an appreciable extent, revolution itself: its content and its forms were also, in the end, considered inessential. This is why Marx's greatest appreciation of the Paris Commune was his characterization of it as the most rational and humane form of organization with which we could face the end of class struggle:

> The Commune does not [do] away with the class struggles, through which the working class strive for the abolition of all classes and, therefore, of all [class rule] …, but it affords the rational medium in which that class struggle can run through its different phases in the most rational and humane way. (*Outlines of The Civil War in France*, p. 156, in Marx & Engels, 1971)

It is a severe and odd paradox for a historical and dialectical radical perspective such as the one we are dealing with. Whatever may occur as a revolutionary course—including the radical experience of the Paris Commune—fails to be *radically valued*, because it would not yet be *authentically human*: it is a negation of the alienated life, but no *full affirmation*. Under this dissociative logic in which the historical dialectic languishes and gets hypostatized by some *result* of *full redemptive consummation*, critical-emancipatory thought loses the possibility of expanding the resources of the social forces that rise up against the logic of capital, and of making its proclamations more than just good intentions. As a result, it is stigmatized and stigmatizable time and again as a *utopian*. The multiple ideologies of the established power take advantage of this to criticize communism as a retrograde disposition and force that lacks the capacity to produce a horizon of social and political coexistence that can effectively improve the powerful resources with which capitalism has organized humanity.

Even under the vast limitations of the alienated life it reproduces, capitalist society has provided us with riches and freedoms previously unknown to humanity, of that progress that Marx himself emphatically celebrated. Capitalism has carried out its *historical tasks* from a variety of increasingly sophisticated institutional resources, including political ones. Well, the abandonment of the political dimension of social activity would constitute an—apparently insurmountable—impasse when a *communist sense of progress*, which results viable and sustainable, has to confront the capitalist sense of it.

5.2 Rereading Marx's Work

Apart from the statements we have reviewed about politics in its positive relation to a humanly emancipated life, we do not find much more in Marx's work. The reason was already stated: the conception of politics as a dimension subsidiary to the *real* activity of human beings; that is, as an artificial dimension that exists as long as the historical conditions for spontaneous harmony among human beings are not in place and that, in the end, is but a *transitory* instrumental resource. As we see it, the critical demands of the contemporary world and globalized capitalism are greater: we must situate politics beyond the liberal horizon of its representation and arrange it for what Marx called a "human history," where individuals can voluntarily and consciously take charge of the management of the common.

Marx's work shows us a historical deployment that could cease to be the blind necessity that imposes itself as a *fortuitous condition of human existence* and become a freedom (conscious practical design) that would become the condition of itself once the development of the social forces makes it possible. The critical task we have argued is to problematize the conditions of a sociality emancipated from capital in the framework of the sublation of the "natural division" of labour and the redesign of its social dialectic. It would be a sociality arranged, henceforth, for the radical promotion of personality and the articulation of the human differences by a management that in practice assumes them indissociable from "the common." In particular, it would be a sociality that, based on all of the above, recognizes the inescapable place of political life. In our judgment, this task still finds in Marx's work a primordial and fundamental, although insufficient, source to develop the paths of denial and affirmation that such a sociality demands.

At this point, we would like to suggest that some elements of Marx's work can be studied and reformulated for thinking the communist politicity. The point here is not "what Marx said or did not say," but the occasion that his work offers us to rethink the question of communism and the place of political power within it. In particular, we propose that Marx's work is defined by what we have elsewhere called a "relational ontology" (del Aguila, 2009), which is traceable in key places of his work such as the third of the *Paris Manuscripts* (Marx, 1975c), as well as in the expository logic of his economic studies, especially in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. In this ontology, every mundane entity (including human individuals) is defined as disposed according to the multifarious interdependencies that inscribe it as an object among other objects, as a reciprocal activity and passivity, in an inexhaustible dialectic from which a *sense of totality* is constituted that then runs through the organization of social structures and modes of production. The social character of human beings would find its foundation in this ontological condition, simultaneously making manifest their co-belonging with Nature.

From this perspective, the subject-object dualism—typical of philosophical modernity—can be resolved (a) without the aporias that we have pointed out in the Marxian perspective of the abolition of political power, or, more deeply, (b) against the essentialist dichotomy between freedom and necessity. If, on the other hand, the ontological presumption of the unity instituted in the relational constitution of each entity is assumed, the objectual character of all human subjectivity can be affirmed:

> A being which is not itself an object for some third being has no being for its *object*; i.e., it is not objectively related. Its being is not objective. (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 337)

Thought in terms of human activity, the play of positions in the domain of the objectual enables us to inscribe subjectivity fully in its determined life, without it being possible to shy away from it in some idealization such as the one we have criticized in the dualism of realms. Human activity would be the potential for the realization of the free dispositions of particular subjects in accordance with the objective conditions that constitute them, where objectivity would not be an alien condition but their own natural being. This is why Marx affirms that "[*m*]*an* is directly a *natural being*" (*Paris Manuscripts*, p. 336): a being whose necessary deployment is the freedom of the human individuals we are.

We could take inspiration from the dynamism of the objectual outlined by this Marxian ontology to put forward different proposals around the life in common and a totality that will not be a mere metaphysical presumption, but—to put it in the Heideggerian vocabulary—the proper mode of our ontic constitution (Heidegger, 1996). The human being would come to be defined by its multifarious objectual conditionality; not only vis-à-vis Nature, but also vis-à-vis his fellow human beings and the products he engenders alongside them, including politics. In some reading notes of James Mill's work (Marx, 1975a), contemporary to the *Paris Manuscripts*, Marx puts it in this way in relation to the human community:

> Since *human* nature is the *true community* of men, by manifesting their *nature* men *create*, produce, the *human community*, the social entity, which is no abstract universal power opposed to the single individual, but is the essential nature of each individual, his own activity, his own life, his own spirit, his own wealth. … It does not depend on man whether this community exists or not; but as long as man does not recognize himself as man, and therefore has not organised the world in a human way, this *community* appears in the form of *estrangement*. (p. 217)

It is therefore a matter of rereading Marx's work by confronting its liberal remnants, according to which the individuals of a communist society could dispose themselves "free of" their natural and communal belongings: either by presuming them to be inessential ("realm of necessity"), or by idealizing the spontaneity that may result from productive technique ("realm of freedom"). Regarding the former, the study of the—ontologically based—anthropological roots from which Marx's work contributes to understand the belonging of the particular to the common is very promising. Regarding the latter, the holistic interdependence that defines Marx's political economy and from which no automatization of technique can be devised—as did the liberalism of the "invisible hand"—is a privileged place for this exploration. All this from the Marxian work itself and in spite of what we have just discussed against Marx or, well, placing Marx against Marx, to resituate the points of departure for rethinking the management of the life in common once capitalist private property of the means of production has been sublated.

Apropos of Marx's anthropological presumptions that we could revisit from this ontological rereading, we find very interesting topics such as

the role of *labour* or *production*—according to the different moments of his work—as the "full development of activity itself" (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 251 passim) in a communist society. Through it, we would consummate the original human dispositions by which the distinctive activity of our species, our capacity to transform Nature and ourselves, carries with it the necessity of a metabolism between humanity and its conditions of realization; that is, the *necessity of mediation*. That this activity of self-realization is "our own activity" would not entail, in this case, a traditional anthropology that accounts for certain human qualities that are merely given and, finally, classifiable and arrangeable into a hierarchy. Instead, it would be the recognition of a certain original conditionality that would contain within itself the dialectic that would allow us to constitute our own way of manifesting ourselves in a humanly emancipated society; a way that could not elude this necessity of mediation, which, in our communist perspective, would have to be a political mediation.

The reach of this mediation in its connection with the necessity of political power for the management of the life in common could also be explored by attending to another anthropological dimension widely documented in Marx's work, i.e., that of *sociality*: "the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (*Theses on Feuerbach*, thesis 6, in Marx, 1976b). We have already seen that the overabundance of the productive forces of communism could not spontaneously satisfy all the requirements of the "realm of necessity." But even if this could be so, which would trivialize the requirement of politics as a space of conflict and/or consensus around the common, we would have that humanity *is* sociality. There is no way to avoid the conflict—spurred on in modern societies—that emerges from the differentiation of interests inherent to the diversity of their reciprocal practical positioning, which could be expressed in an eagerness for recognition, competition, communication, education, spirituality, or the like. All of them could be *technically addressed*, but *never technically decided*, making necessary the political dimension of praxis to deal with their multifarious contrariety. This line of reflection could be, at least, pursued from an ontology that situates Marx as *the* thinker of human sociality in modern philosophy.

Likewise, the problematic representations of *progress* in Marx, committed to the perspective of "total emancipation," or to the polarity between "total loss" and "total recovery," could also be reviewed in this

context. The purpose would be to avoid associating them with the teleological belief in the need for some *full self-accomplishment* of the original conditionality of the individuals; the same that would have been systematically and increasingly neglected by the "natural division" of labour and the rule of private property. It is, then, a variety of progress in which the historical belongings and results that are the product of the metabolic activity of our species with Nature and the result of life in society itself could be considered irrelevant once we reach a certain point in technological development that *resolves it all*.

Such a historical-philosophical "premise" would have a logical scope that would generate impasses rather than contributions to the Marxian understanding of social history. It would render this history a transit toward the redemption by which the human interests would become reciprocally indifferent and would find themselves harmonized from a muteness in which individuals would not sublate the dissociation already known in capitalism. Rather than making communism the beginning of a *properly human history*, it would be determined as the end of all social history, that moment where human beings would cease to inhabit the finitude of communal life. A sort of Marxian-Promethean absolute is here profiled and—as we believe we have shown—a powerful source of utopianism. Focusing our gaze on the relational character of human beings, on the other hand, could enable us to rethink this progress outside of shapes of historical indeterminacy such as those of the "realm of freedom." This gaze would be more faithful to the dialectic that reworks the preceding historical content, so that particular subjects are realized in the natural and communal necessity to which they belong. Here, therefore, there would be no pretension of abandoning either historical determinacy or historical necessity.

The very topic of *estrangement*—in our judgment, the negativity against which the whole of Marx's work is directed—can be revisited from these considerations. In this case, we affirm—in opposition to Marx—that indifference to the need to positively and politically undertake the management of the common would entail a new shape of estrangement defined by the presumption of immanence and self-sufficiency of a communist technical design. The logic of capital, in turn, has fostered the shaping of a perverse dialectic between capacities and needs, one by which capacities are deployed that do not satisfy our own needs:

> The barrier to *capital* is the fact that this entire development proceeds in a contradictory way, and that the elaboration of the productive forces, of general wealth, etc., knowledge, etc., takes place in such a way that the working individual *alienates* himself; that he relates to the conditions brought out of him by his labour, not as to the conditions of *his own*, but of *alien wealth*, and of his own poverty. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 465)

The technique of capital and its long-running development of expert systems have been the tyrannical mediation to quench the thirst for surplus value, a thirst that reproduces the alienation of the producers. For the reappropriation of human products desired by Marx to be effective—i.e., the sublation of alienation—a non-dualist perspective of communism would be required. By virtue of it, rather than insisting on a strong distinction between the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom," we would conceive free activity as one that brings into play human needs and capacities that respond to its deep relational determinations. If—beyond capital and social classes—emancipation persists in labelling a certain dimension of transformative human activity as *necessary-inevitable-unwanted labour*, then we would keep a foundational dimension of our being—and not just any dimension, if we follow Marx—condemned to the old imprint of labour as a damnation. On the contrary, we would have to think and dispose ourselves toward labour as a human realization that is no *mere means* to satisfy an alien end in the "realm of freedom," but freedom realized in itself. Only then will we be able to speak of a de-alienation from productive activity that seriously intends to reshape its organization for the broadest possible deployment of personal capacities and satisfactions.

The route hinted at here is that of a radicalization of the Marxian critique of estranged labour. In contrast to liberal culture, the neutrality of technique would no longer be assumed. Instead, we would stand vigilant about what technique would bring to the self-realization of the producers from their own practical exercise and not only through the appropriation of the products that it allows to objectify. In short, it is a matter of subordinating technique to the interests of the associated producers. Following the arguments we have gone through, sublating the estrangement from our own productive activity supposes to stop contraposing it to a properly free activity *that is somewhere else*. Moreover, it supposes politically managing the interest of self-realization in our own productive activity;

that is, to politically take charge of the technical requirements of an emancipated life to constitute these instrumental mediations according to the interest of their protagonists.

The *sense of totality* that Marx inherits from Hegel in his anthropological conceptions is also rooted in his political economy, which is a discourse that claims to be situated in the *viewpoint of the concrete*. From this perspective, such a sense of totality supposes the inscription of human activity in the horizon of finitude in which it produces and satisfies its needs. In the Marxian critique of the "Robinsonades" of Smith's and Ricardo's political economy (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 17–18; Guimaraes, 2016), we can notice a look at the social relations that constitute the totality of which production is but an *aspect* (even if an essential one): the relations between independent private producers. In the framework of bourgeois economy, the circumstance of these relations is naturalized, making the isolated individual not a historical result but an original condition. Bourgeois economic science had started from the historical emergence of modern civil society around the sixteenth century and from its historical consolidation in the eighteenth century, to idealize the condition by which individuals appear to each other as *external necessities*.

Marx's confrontation with economic liberalism leaves us with much to work on regarding the representations and practices of liberal culture around the life in common:

> Man is a *zoon politicon* in the most literal sense: he is not only a social animal, but an animal that can isolate itself only within society. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 18)

Marx reinforces this affirmation by an analogy with the impossibility of a private language, thus emphasizing the nonsense that *in the origin* we find *isolated individuals*:

> Production by an isolated individual outside society—something rare, which might occur when a civilised person already dynamically in possession of the social forces is accidentally cast into the wilderness—is just as preposterous as the development of language without individuals who live *together* and speak to one another. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 18)

That man is characterized by Marx as a *political animal* is hardly of little interest to us and has enormous heuristic potential in the introductory pages to the *Grundrisse* from which the quotation comes. True, Marx dispatches the issue as an unobjectionable point of departure, as he considers it "unnecessary to dwell upon this point further" (*Grundrisse I*, p. 18). But for our perspective, this is no trifling matter. The isolation proper to the Robinsonades of the bourgeois political economy refers to a social determinacy; i.e., the conditions of the capitalist market. To account for this, it is necessary to raise the question of the forms in which the persons reproduce their existences, as subjects who require one another (relational determinacy), even though they no longer constitute any original community among themselves.

Well then, what are these forms? For capitalist society, they are none other than those enunciated by Marx: a life in common that contains within itself the condition that allows that the sociality of each individual be asserted in the shape of reciprocal isolation and external necessity. According to this, the life in common—that which concerns everyone, the human condition of *zoon politicon*—maintains its relevance against its own immediate phenomenality marked by the dissociation between particular subjects. In capitalism, it does so by desubstantializing social life through the political mediations of modern citizenship: right and, in general, the various forms of the state, by which non-voluntarily concerted human efforts can take place and be intertwined with each other. Accordingly, the viability of modern isolation, idealized by the "Robinsonades" that so irritated and amused Marx, is defined in accordance with the bourgeois form in which life in common itself is reproduced. It is precisely this bourgeois form that allows the Robinson of political economy to land in a "wilderness" to validate there his belongings and his social constitution in individual terms.

From here, we can propose, for capitalist society, a distinction between "political life," understood as "life in common," and "social life," understood as "life proper to bourgeois society." The latter would be the historical product of modern mercantile society, which could not be thought of outside its articulation with the totality of human endeavors or outside this "life in common" (*zoon politicon*). In turn, communist society is engendered in the midst of bourgeois society and—in our line of reasoning—the antagonistic life of the individuals who have thus appeared on the scene of world history should not necessarily be reduced to their

condition of members of a given social class. If this is the case, the question about the constantly renewed requirements of a life in common situated in the midst of non-class antagonisms is perfectly transposed to the horizon of a post-capitalist society such as the one Marx longed for.

From the opening we propose here, we can then ask: Are there theoretical elements in Marx's work for addressing the peculiar conjunction between personal difference, the finitude of resources, antagonism, and the necessity of political power for the management of the common? In other words, can we think, from Marx, human freedom in positive terms and in all its political implications, without the liberal remnants we have discussed? If so, Marx's political economy would also be a place to explore the sense of totality that characterized his work and the extent to which the role of the political in the cause of emancipatory interests can be reconsidered. From this ground, a plausible hypothesis would be that the revolution against capitalism could not be a rupture that cancels or abolishes, at least not from Marx's holistic and integrative understanding of the political economy of capitalism. Rather, from a perspective attentive to the course of the immanent, the focus would be placed on the real necessity that makes its way by sublating itself; not from some external teleological call, but from the movement of contrarieties that open the way to social change and to the limits and recomposition of all its shapes.

The communist revolution, then, would respond to the immanent necessity of the productive and transformative sociality proper of capital, rather than to a purely libertarian or voluntarist cry. The dialectic of revolutionary transformation would emerge as a requirement of the social relations and structures fully intertwined in capitalist society, but not as a simple *abstract liquidation* of the relations from which it arises. Such a situation would be evident in the *economy of time* of a Marxian communist society, where a very high productivity of labour resulting from capitalist development is assumed. Indeed, the potential of capitalist science and technique would provide—to a humanity organized in a communist form—a high capacity to rationalize the processes of distribution to meet consumption demands unheard of in world history.

In this same line of attention placed on the concrete historical becoming, we can return to the relations between circulation, on the one hand, and the representation and articulation of the common in capitalist societies, on the other, insofar as the former is a constitutive totality of a broader global social formation:

> Because circulation is a totality of the social process, it is also the first form in which not only the social relation appears as something independent of individuals as, say, in a coin or an exchange value, but the whole of the social movement itself. … Circulation as the first totality among the economic categories serves well to illustrate this fact. (*Grundrisse I*, p. 132)

The mercantile structure of relations on which capitalism rests is the society of independent private producers who respond to a certain division of labour. In modern societies, the practical-abstract forms of citizenship—from which political power is exerted—regulate the domain of commodity-capitalist circulation, making possible the intertwining of the producers.

In our judgment, this is established by Marx, in his own economic works, against any reductionist reading of the productive (cf. del Aguila, 2020). In counterpoint, the determinacy that production exerts on circulation becomes manifest, for example, in Marx's attack on the reformism of Proudhon and his followers (cf. *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in Marx, 1976a). Marx confronts the Proudhonian pretension of abolishing money by issuing banknotes that represent working hours. According to Marx, this measure not only fails to solve the problems of the social domination of capitalism and the economic structures that sustain it, but it would also constitute a variety of them (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 51–74). The Marxian option is to confront at the root the rationality of the market and the primacy of independent private producers, which—to Marx's knowledge—Proudhon would not be willing to undertake. Instead, the dialectical articulation of the levels of production and circulation would lead to the viewpoint of the concrete for a critique of capitalism with a sense of totality.

For our part, our reading of the Marxian work assumes the articulation of circulation with the dimension of the common and the necessity of political power in capitalism. The unrealized plan for a fourth part of *Capital* devoted to the State could be interpreted in favor of our perspective (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 45, 194–195). However, we are not only interested in determining the role of the political for a totalizing critique of capitalist society, but also in situating the role that would correspond to the political in a communist society. To this end, we could maintain the necessity of political power to cope with a *communist economy of time*. This economy would viabilize the management of the different human capacities and needs. All this, in a scenario where the split level of the

circulation of commodities would no longer mediate between production and consumption, but where the necessity of articulate efforts and products under non-commodity social forms would persist.

In communism, in this social form that has sublated the historical presuppositions of capitalism, the generation of wealth would not know the limit that circulation of commodities constitutes for the development of our modern societies (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 468). We find ourselves, then, in a scene far removed from the liberal split between the public and the private, which in turn is based on the split between circulation and production. Here, the requirements of a communist society would make of the particular the moment of the personality that has to be integrated into the common for its self-realization. The productive powers of the community would be strengthened in the same movement by which its own distributive demands would be satisfied on the basis of the non-commodity dependence between particular subjects. This dependence would be based on the common property of the means of production, where the dissociation proper to commodity logic would no longer prevail and where the relations between particular subjects would no longer be established by external necessity.

To this we can add the viewpoint of *reproduction* in order to articulate the moments of production, distribution, and consumption as part of the same organic movement disposed toward the self-realization of particular subjects—following the line explained in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse* (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 26 ff.). In his critique of the capitalist mode of production, and through a radical sense of totality, Marx articulated these moments, along with that of circulation, as distinct spheres of alienated life under capital. Our rereading of Marx's economic studies would have to inquire whether the reproduction of these different spheres would suppose the necessity of political power in a communist society, as it occurs in class societies. In capitalist society, for example, the necessity of politics has not only responded to the determinations of circulation. In Marx's economic work, there are many places in which this relation between economic reproduction and the political dimension is affirmed from the moment of production, and in world-history terms:

> each form of production produces its own legal relations, forms of government, etc. The crudity and lack of comprehension lies precisely in that organically coherent factors are brought into haphazard relation with one another, i.e., into a merely speculative connection. (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 26)

There is no room for haphazard (indeterminacy) or foreignness in the role of politics as an aspect of the global social totality to which production belongs, that is, as an inescapable mediation for production. Hence the banality—reviled by Marx—of bourgeois economists, who believe "that production proceeds more smoothly with modern police," which presupposes the rule according to a higher law, "than, e.g., under club-law" (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 26). As if the latter (club-law) and the former (the rule according to a higher law) did not respond to the modes necessary for—that is, favorable to—the reproduction of the different forms of production: "[t]hey forget, however, that club-law too is law" (cf. *Grundrisse I*, p. 26).

The issue would thus be determined by the political and juridical requirements for the reproduction of a communist economy. This, due to the inescapable *positive bets* that would have to govern this society, and that could no longer take the appearance of *no bet* as it occurs under the liberal version of the public and its fetishistic appearance of neutrality. On the contrary, such bets would be made transparent, thus revealing the interests prioritized by the associated producers, whether in terms of investment of efforts, distribution and consumption patterns, technological choices, etc. In terms of bourgeois society, the dialectical unity that constitutes the totality of social systems is thus expressed:

> If in the fully developed bourgeois system each economic relationship presupposes the other in a bourgeois-economic form, and everything posited is thus also a premiss, that is the case with every organic system. This organic system itself has its premisses as a totality, and its development into a totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality. Its becoming this totality constitutes a moment of its process, of its development. (cf. *Grundrisse I*, pp. 208)

These remarks are widely spread throughout Marx's economic work. They offer us a totalizing view and—regarding the reflection on a communist politicity—leave us with the question of whether it is feasible to abandon the political dimension of human activity from the dialectical logic of this communist economy. Under capitalist relations of production, politics resulted in an inescapable determinacy. Communism would be, then, the radical reshaping of these relations, although never its mere abandonment; this, due to the greater complexity and richness of human

aspirations it would bring about. How, then, could we situate politics in a hypothetical communist society from the viewpoint of Marx's political economy?

Of course, we do not claim that the critical tasks of the present should be limited to reinterpret Marx's work in pursuit of a more thorough reflection of the concrete terms of the revolution against capital and the positive characterization of its societal alternative, communism. The presuppositions and orientations of Marx's work are not only an indispensable contribution and a very valuable point of departure for this, but also a limit that must be established if the radical critique of the capitalist mode of production is to continue. That is, if this critique is to be developed in the full extent of its anthropological, economic-organizational, and political terms; in terms, then, of an integrally conceived humanity. Consequently, from the theoretical point of view, it is necessary to develop a sort of double research program. On the one hand, we must take advantage of what can be reworked from Marx's work for this purpose. On the other hand, we should distance ourselves from it wherever its pursuit reports utopianism or an insufficient perspective on the concrete totality that is object of communist criticism and bets.

The need to rethink communism is presented by Badiou as a philosophical obligation that must "bring the communist hypothesis into existence in a different modality" (2008, p. 115). Our investigation has only partially delved into the—already in dispute—issue of the positive redefinition of communism as a concept. Our effort, hence, has been just to confront Marxian communism in order to rethink it radically and try to surmount some of its most important internal tensions and impasses. However, we can offer a conclusion in terms of the closure of our inquiry about communism in Marx and the openings it may suggest: one of the "new modalities of theoretical existence" required by emancipatory perspectives presupposes a—yet to be formulated—Marxian theory of what would be a communist politicity.

Against the egalitarianist remnants of most of Marx's heirs and, especially, against their classic negations of politics as a *medium* for human emancipation—that is, against these veiled varieties of progressive liberalism—we maintain the need to distinguish the radical emancipatory causes of the communist bet from the anarchism that may come to be associated with them. In the case at hand, the anarchist vocation for an indeterminate freedom or for the indeterminacy of freedom—i.e., the abstract negation of political power in the communist scene—results

analogous to the fantasy of emancipating ourselves from our substantive belongings, whether affective, familial, ethical, communal, ecological, etc. To say it with Hegel, it presents itself as a *hapless for-itself* that should more wisely recognize that, no matter where it goes, it carries these belongings—perhaps to its subjective disgrace—resolutely embedded within itself. The anarchist vocation that can thus be associated with communism does not assume with the needed radicalism this crucial issue: the realization of human freedom demands a material facticity or, better yet, a social body capable of organizing itself to decide and viabilize its decisions, assuming the finitude of its metabolic relationship with Nature at the ontological level.

Faced with all this, *politics*—so much vilified—will be needed, time and again, to counter the utopian spirit. In order to think emancipatory alternatives that confront and sublate what is already offered by the logic of capital, we need to rid ourselves once and for all of any Edenic nostalgia that overlooks our essential antagonistic determination emancipatorily interpreted: the self-government of the community. Becoming freely associated individuals "in control of our living conditions" implies abandoning these embellishments that hide the fact that our life is but *life in necessity*: a multifaceted necessity that will permanently trigger social and political confrontations. It is even debatable that shunning the conflictive dimension of an emancipated life indicates some good wish. It would seem, rather, an eagerness for self-complacency that—again with Hegel—seeks to *flee from the negative*. In terms of the development of the consciousness of the West, it is presented as the resistance to assume in their full scope the challenges of that old "unsociable sociability" that Kant identified in its unsurpassable character (cf. Kant, 2009, p. 13). Given the desubstantialized life that distinguishes the Modern Age, communism could only be a type of modern society: conflict will remain a part of us while we are the individuals we are.

And it was precisely Karl Marx who showed us that the emergence of the individual—as a result of the progressive predominance of capitalist relations of production—is not a civilizing achievement to be abandoned in the name of freedom, but to be radicalized when we are capable of sublating social class domination and the estrangement it reproduces. Well then, alongside the "free personality," we must remain in the agonal life that is inherent to it. Assuming this conflict in all its vast repercussions, including political ones, is a better disposition to be capable to deal with the vast deployment of the individuals we could become in a communist or humanly emancipated society.

5.3 Rethinking Communism

Our effort culminates in the bet for the theoretical possibility and the practical necessity of thinking political life in non-bourgeois terms, including its sense of citizenship and justice; that is, in humanly emancipated terms. Of course, there has been a vast discussion in the last fifty years on the relation between justice and the emancipatory scope of Marx's thought (cf. Cohen, 1981; Diquattro, 1998; Geras, 1985, 1992; Husami, 1978; Kain, 1986; McCarney, 1992; Tucker, 1969, Chapter 2; van de Veer, 1973; Vincent, 1993; Wood, 1972). In Marx's approach, in the history of class struggle, the characterization of justice in its political sense responds to the exercise of domination resulting from that struggle. The relation between class structure and politics, including the political dimension of justice, becomes part of *prehistory*—to put it in the classic terms of the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (cf. p. 264, in Marx, 1987).

The issue can also be raised with respect to other dimensions of the human activity resulting from the "natural division" of labour, such as the sciences, the arts, or education itself, as developments of the human complexity over which there is no "going back." Thus, it is necessary to dispute whether the identity between class domination and politics should be eternalized; that is, whether the political dimension of social activity has been forged as a complex reality that cannot simply disappear when the specific form of division of labour that established its necessity (i.e., social classes) has been set aside in the course of social development. Such a univocal association between politics and social classes profiles a mechanical view of the social dialectic. It disregards the very *Voraussetzungen* established by Marx in *The German Ideology*, conditions whereby human needs engender new needs and, with it, structures of reproduction that do not regress, but rework the complexity achieved in accordance with the growing demands of the producers (cf. Nordahl, 1987). In this line, the disappearance of class antagonism should not cancel the need to manage the common, that which concerns us all and affects all the products of social labour. It should imply, yes, its re-signification for the constantly renewed requirements of a "human division" of labour in accordance with social relations and structures that recognize and promote personal realization.

The distinction proposed by John Maguire between "government" and "politics," inspired by Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* (in Marx, 1974)

on primitive communities, has a heuristic value for thinking a communist politicity where "politics" as known in "natural history" would lose meaning in favor of a non-authoritarian "government" that is not divorced from the interests of the associated producers. Thus, apropos of the officials in the Paris Commune, Maguire points out:

> They will not dominate society because society will no longer need to be dominated. There will no longer be antagonistic divisions within the social order, and thus there will be no need for an external power to impose society's order on itself. (Maguire, 1978, p. 234)

This statement, presented in a classic vein, allows us to envision how the management of the common would be in communism. Maguire maintains here a presumption of spontaneous harmony similar to Marx's. Consequently, he does not fully assume the seriousness of the conflicts to come and the need for a properly political moment; a moment that would no longer respond to the simplicity of primitive communism, but to the recognition of the play of antagonistic forces with its fabric of majorities, minorities, consensuses, dissensions, etc. Instead, it would be convenient to think in terms of a humanly emancipated life in common from specific considerations, such as the collective management of the means of production, self-government in diverse forms of socio-spatial aggregation, etc., but not from reductionist presumptions of human conflict that conclude in the invisibilization of antagonisms.

In his commentary to the Prologue to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Maguire argues about the end of social antagonisms in the pursue of "government," as opposed to "politics," in the post-capitalist communist society:

> there may well be antagonisms, but these will be genuinely between the individuals involved, because of personal characteristics, rather than because of the built-in antagonism of socially-imposed roles. In this sense there is a reasonable argument that where the social order itself does not regularly and necessarily throw up antagonisms between groups of individuals, there will be no need for the kind of *authoritarian intervention* without which divided society could not function. In this sense we may argue that the *functions* of government will be less conducive to pretensions on the part of office-holders than they are in divided societies. (Maguire, 1978, p. 235)

Our case is that such conflicts will be regular and necessary due to two circumstances. On the one hand, we have the specific historical reshaping of the anthropological bases of those individuals who lived under the logic of capital and who form the society of freely associated producers, organized according to their particular aspirations for self-realization. On the other hand, we have the requirements of an economic management that must recognize the different capacities and needs from which social wealth would be produced, but without losing global standards of efficacy, efficiency, and sustainability, without presuming that the one and the other will harmonize without conflict, and within a finite framework of social and material resources. Hence the "authoritarian necessity," which we could restate as the *democratic authority* of the freely associated producers because the satisfaction of the particular in the common would no longer be given in the original form of primitive communism. In this case, according to Maguire's reading of the *Ethnological Notebooks*, there was a kind of elementary unity in which individual and collective interests would not be contraposed. Such a condition would be plausible due to:

> the *lack of development* in both individuals and community. … It then becomes plausible to distinguish the running of this kind of society from what we call politics, on the grounds that it is a case of genuine *self-government*, where the members of the commune are not subject to a centre of authority outside themselves. (Maguire, 1978, p. 229)

The case is—we insist—that we are not facing the scene of primitive communism and the self-government of the common cannot be the same as in post-capitalist communism.

Likewise, Maguire speculates from Marx (cf. *Ethnological Notebooks*) and Engels (cf. 1990) if division of labour—which would persist even after social classes have been abolished—would open the doors to the "foreign" and "authoritarian" political dimension they both rejected (cf. Maguire, 1978, pp. 236–238). The persistence of what we have called a "non-natural division" of labour (cf. our Chapter 2) suggests—from our perspective—that the management of the common in political terms would be necessary in a communist society. Not only because of the "magnitude" and "complexity" of this constantly renewed communist division of labour—as Maguire points out—but also because of the diversity of interests that such a division would immanently engender within the framework of a determinate human and material finitude. This

ensemble of social and material determinations would claim the alluded "authoritarian" power that is so much rejected in its discourse by the Marxist tradition that comes from its founders. That would hold, for example, in the perspective of the *representation* of the functions of each particular subject as a member of the species, which we referred to from the early *Kreuznach Manuscript* (cf. pp. 111–129, in Marx, 1975b; Springborg, 1984). This implies the need for a political dimension where certain decisions are made that could counter the perspectives and even—although partially—the interests of certain individuals and collectivities.

As we have argued, the pretension that the individual and collective antagonisms affecting the management of the life in common will disappear in a communist society is a utopian pretension and it cannot but fail. The demand, rather, is to take charge of them. Even more so if, in this case, the producers would be freed from the ideological "adjustments" whereby capitalist domination has resolved in its favor the multiple forms of social conflict it has faced throughout its history. There would no longer be any place for the egalitarian mystifications that come from the domain of circulation and that are expressed in a culminating way in the creed and experience of liberal citizenship. Rather, we would be situated in a society that would make transparent its different interests and forms of personal realization, whether individual or collective.

The viability of such a society requires valuating and managing the negativity installed and potentiated in this scene of free and (mutually) different individuals ontologically situated in finitude; there situated in a conscious way, according to the Marxian expectation. What is required, to a large extent, is that our self-realization impetuses can be effectively determined. To this end, these impetuses must be affirmed as the game of negativity and antagonism inherent to a free life of individuals in community, but not from the presumption of some "spontaneous harmony" among them. This is not only an anthropological-philosophical claim we can maintain from the Marxian writings. The personal, potential, and effective wealth historically developed in capitalist society confronts the pretension of a communist society that, being its result, wants to be free of antagonisms concerning the life in common. Ultimately, and following the very Marxian dialectic of history, communism would be a constantly renewed modern sociality whose individuals and their particularities would continue to be decisive in its shaping.

The responsible for making this game possible is political life: this domain that, having presented itself as a "heavenly sphere" in various pre-capitalist modes of production, was then determined as an apparently neutral mediation for the viability of commodity exchange under capital. Well, we maintain that the issue now concerns its potential role as a *medium* in a humanly emancipated society: as an element that would no longer be a simple instrument of something else before it (thus, instrument of bourgeois society), but *a space where the common is decided from the belonging assumed by the particular subjects* that constitute it in the form of participation for their self-realization with others. In the face of the break between capitalist society and a possible communist society, the relation between the requirements of mercantile dynamism and the determination of the common is presented *assuming the sublation of commodity-capitalist exchange in a communist society, although not the liquidation of all forms of articulation between the set of particular subjects*. The absolute disappearance of such an articulation would constitute a return to the primitive community in a form that is idealized and impracticable given the terms inherited from the preceding exchange.[7]

On the contrary, the complex structure of needs to be satisfied and capacities to be harvested would establish various forms of non-commodity articulation, cooperation, and exchange (whether of reciprocity, mutual interest, symmetrical, asymmetrical, even competition, etc.) according to the pattern of a "non-natural division" of labour. Obviously, none of this would involve a State as the "official representative of class domination" or of a public space conceived as the "level torn from social life," but it may well consider the common in terms of that *decision and activity which concerns the totality of society* established in communist mode. Thus conceived, and not as a state institutionalism or a torn public dimension, political life would be disposed as an emancipatory organicity for the cause of human interests. It will therefore be able to renew itself beyond its subjection to the requirements of the capitalist mode of production or any other known class structure. Political life will respond, instead, to forms of cooperation and exchange that would no

[7] It is worth recalling that, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels use precisely this argument that evokes the weight of *historical continuity*. They use it for maintaining the universal character of the communist revolution, a universal character in accordance with the world history it comes from, and which has been the product of the history of capitalism (cf. *The German Ideology*, pp. 46–48).

longer produce the scansions—extensively denounced in Marx's work—that can turn it into an *illusion of community* or an "illusory community" (cf. *The German Ideology*, p. 46).

Under liberalism—but also under fascist and socialist totalitarianisms—right has turned out to be an administrative process and a technique of domination. The communist politicity we have arrived at here must break free from this horizon. To this end, it must make explicit and permanent the subsumption of right and of its institutionalism as a whole to the will of the reciprocally differentiated associated individuals, in the understanding—and under the abysmal challenge—that this will would be foreign to the monochord consensus. Not only because of the permanent opening that would come from its own reinventions—that is, from the change in its prevailing convictions—but also because of the inherent diversity—that of free and (mutually) different individuals—that would constitute it in different circumstances.

What is at stake is the *content* of the personal and collective bets that are manifested and intended to be asserted in the life in common. In other words, to sublate the terms of liberal reflection on the political dimension of praxis implies going beyond negative reasoning about human freedoms and producing the *medium* where their positivity can be effectively deployed; this is none other than the space of *the common*, politically determined. The affirmations that come from the wills of the associated producers, with the consensuses and dissensions that result from them, would find in a hypothetical communist politicity the scenario where freedom can finally sublate the liberal restrictions attached to an abstract and negative defense of the human. The sublation of these restrictions is in itself a key to the enrichment of personal and collective realizations, now in a better condition to incorporate the concrete differences that constitute them positively.

While the liberal withdraws into privacy and makes the public an *instrument* of the private interest, Marx aims to sublate this split between the public and the private in order to bring unity to the understanding of both dimensions that constitute the same social structure: the structure of the capitalist mode of production. But when it comes to representing a communist society, the immanent dialectic that would constitute this unity between the particular and the common is relegated by Marx himself. This dialectic is not re-signified according to the new terms of its reproduction, nor thanks to the de-fetishization of the public that would have followed the emancipatory rupture against the logic of capital. The

scene thus emerges of a "non-political" social life, a life which at most would be—as it is in the locus communis of liberalism, in the "state of nature"—the more or less desolate landscape inhabited by individuals who are reciprocally independent of each other and who would be—at best—*aggregated* alongside each other, although no longer in the mode of "the war of all against all." These would be, then, particular lives that do not demand the common as their condition of viability or that, in any case, demand it only in its technically impoverished form, which would provide them with all the goods and services they might require.

Well then, in order to keep on radically thinking the terms of a humanly emancipated life, as it emerges from the alienated life in contemporary capitalism, we have to consummate a more comprehensive rupture with the liberal tradition. Marxian representations such as the ones we have pointed out above—clearly different from the communism we have proposed here—are not only compatible with liberalism, but also with an openly anarchist orientation that presupposes the equations "social life without the State = the public = the political" or "collective life without the State = the public = the political." Proposals such as that of returning to "the village" in small social sectors or groups that would produce their life in reciprocal isolation would not suffice. In Marx's own phrasing, such a possibility has no basis given the highly centralized and interdependent terms of production and material exchange to which mankind has already arrived under capitalism: that is, "world history" as a social activity fully articulated by the world market (cf. *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1 passim).

While visiting these tensions and contradictions within Marx's thought, we conclude that something more is at stake here than the *external* recognition of his kinship with the liberal tradition. We have sought to show that there is a flaw of incoherence in his work as a whole when he frames the terms of human emancipation; to a large extent, we have sought an *internal critique* of his work. We hope to have shown that this is not a *mere insufficiency* where "Marx's project did not have time to develop and complete itself." It is not, then, that Marx did not finish his work or that, as we mentioned above, he had not completed the original plan of his economic studies, which contained a volume dedicated to the State under the capitalist mode of production. Marx's work contained within its midst *structural impasses* for a radical view of human emancipation that would situate it in the viewpoint of the concrete or the historical necessity in which all human freedom—including that of communism—resides.

Likewise, we have not pretended to propose any concrete shaping for a communist politicity. We identify a void and call for the need to provide it with content and shape it from the primacy of human interests in the scene of a society emancipated from capital and class domination in general. Against the current of liberalism, anarchism, and Marxism itself, we maintain the necessity of political power for the fullest realization of human freedoms, specifically if these are conceived from a Marxian representation of what would be a humanly emancipated or communist society. We note the philosophical task of pushing critical thinking to positively incorporate the determination of political power in the promotion of freedom and the deployment of its potentialities.

From this theoretical place, the historical, conceptual, and practical need to elaborate the political forms of emancipation is determined. It is a need that we consider firmly established and spurred on by the deployment of contemporary capitalism and its forms of estrangement and domination: e.g., the ideological depoliticization of social and economic life, the primacy of technique, consumerism, environmental depredation of biospheric scope, among other varieties of our alienated life. It is, hence, an installed need that critique must finally assume in order to: (a) study the drive-oriented part of our lives and the forms of consciousness that we know today as a historical product of capitalist society (anthropological dimension); (b) understand the finances and the constantly renewed terms of the capitalist management of production, circulation, distribution and consumption (management of the common); and, finally, (c) investigate the characteristics of a politics based on the recognition of individual and collective antagonism as an anthropological condition of coexistence in a non-fetishistic society which, in turn, would result from the society of capital and its revolutionary transformation (communist politicity).

Even if just to outline the complexities that these questions raise, and as a final digression, the issue of *equality before the law* could be thought of as part of communist politicity. If we expect that, in a communist social order, private interests are no longer ideologically misrepresented as "the interests of all" through politics, then the real personality of the producers, voluntarily associated from their particularity, will have to displace the absolutization of the abstract person (e.g., under the forms of modern citizenship). The issue is, of course, very complex, since the paths that would be outlined here cannot simply "abolish" formal equality if we assume some equivalent of the current "fundamental rights" (such

as, for example, the right not to be tortured) or some guidelines of strict homogenization in domains such as criminal law. At the same time, a power structure that assumes the communist primacy of personal interests will undoubtedly be democratic, but it will not necessarily assent to all the recipes of liberal democracy whose path we have known in recent centuries.

Thus, for the issue raised, it will not have to assume the growing contemporary—also socialist or, more precisely, egalitarianist—conviction, abstract to say the least, according to which "we must all decide about everything." We know that the logic of capital confronts—in its own way and from its interest of accumulation—this utopian conviction through that full shape of contemporary alienation by which technique and its expert systems "displace" politics in supposedly egalitarian and neutral terms; although what actually happens is that politics takes the form of technical knowledge and practice. In turn, in the road to communism we are outlining, recognizing the particularity of the knowledge and practice of the freely associated producers can lead us back to the shape of the shoemaker in the *Kreuznach Manuscript* (cf. 116–119), who represented the common without assuming the material identity whereby "everyone does and takes care of everything." In that shape, the possibility remains to be explored that the concrete determinations of the associated producers, subject to a "non-natural division" of labour, enable them to speak and decide—from the specificity of their social activity—on matters that both concern them and they have knowledge about.

Of course, there will be matters that would concern everyone and about which everyone should have a certain knowledge. Likewise, everyone should have the prerogative to communicate and try to assert their will through the flow of social forces and wills that interact in the political processes where consensus and dissent to which the matter gives rise are generated. However, in the framework of the complexity of such a sociality, it is to be expected that there be other issues for which this is not the case. Here, the universal determination of democratic participation would be decided from the concrete being of the activity of each particular subject. Issues like these impose the need to reflect on communist politicity, defined from the centrality of antagonism, for a society of individuals disposed to their personal self-realization from their inescapable belonging to the common.

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